MODERN WRITERS AT WORK

PIERCY

Estella E. Baker

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MODERN WRITERS AT WORK

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TO

M. K. P. and J. W. P.

who first put books in my way

He soon perceived, however, that the battles which Sir Miles and the rest had waged against armed knights to win a kingdom were not half so arduous as this which he now undertook to win immortality against the English language. Anyone moderately familiar with the rigours of composition will not need to be told the story in detail; how he wrote and it seemed good; read and it seemed vile; corrected and tore up; cut out; put in; was in ecstasy; in despair; had his good nights and bad mornings; snatched at ideas and lost them; saw his book plain before him and it vanished; acted his people's parts as he ate; mouthed them as he walked; now cried; now laughed; vacillated between this style and that; now preferred the heroic and pompous; next the plain and simple; now the vales of Tempe; then the fields of Kent or Cornwall; and could not decide whether he was the divinest genius or the greatest fool in the world.

—VIRGINIA WOOLF, *Orlando.*

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PREFACE

Although college freshmen were directly responsible for the beginnings of this textbook, it has been developed with the hope that it may aid the advanced student as well. Its purpose, then, is two-fold:

1. To provide contemporary "specimens" of composition for beginners.

2. To provide a guide for more advanced students in the study of the writers of our modern literature. For them, some so-called "popular writers" have been included, so that they may study "what is being done."

Obviously, specimen novels could not be included, but in their place have been substituted narrative incidents, descriptions, and character portrayals chosen from contemporary novels, which may lead to the reading of the books from which they are taken. Collateral reading also in the essay, short-story, etc., is recommended.

The teacher of advanced composition and literature has more freedom to experiment with his students and to outline the course of study accordingly. It is hoped that this book will help him and his students in the study of contemporary writers, and their methods in so far as methods, which are diverse and sometimes intangible, can be analyzed. As far as possible, the authors speak for themselves in the letters which they have contributed in response to letters sent to them. Sometimes they have preferred to have republished expository essays already in print. In some cases, they have submitted a page of manuscript in lieu of a letter or revision. The selections are mostly their own suggestions.

One short-story writer, remembering perhaps some unfortunate examples, said: "I am sure you don't want me to send a message to your students because I don't in the least believe in

being 'taught to write' by formulae—'plot,' 'scene,' 'character drawing,' etc.—the kind of thing that is going to result in turning out a generation of tin soldiers looking all alike—literature being made 'safe for democracy.' I believe in studying the great models—and hoping that all the truly gifted of the pupils will professionally survive." That is a pretty severe denunciation of us who are teachers, but it is not without answer. In the first place, most of us have ceased to teach by rote or outline; our textbooks, including this one, are more formally outlined than most of the teaching that goes with them. In the second place, our chief purpose is not to turn out Shakespeares, but men and women who will know how to use their own language. In the third place, our universities and colleges more and more are separating the possibly gifted students from the rest in order to give them more freedom of expression and, whenever possible, to put them under those teachers who have had some experience in writing. Things are not as they used to be!

The second purpose of this book is better explained by an answer to Ted Babbitt, who protested: "I don't see why they give us this old-fashioned junk by Milton and Shakespeare and Wordsworth and all these has-beens. . . . Oh, I guess I could stand it to see a show by Shakespeare, if they had swell scenery and put on a lot of dog, but to sit down in cold blood and read 'em—these teachers—how do they get that way?" [1]

It is not my aim to ignore the "old-fashioned junk," nor is it to put on a show with a "lot of swell scenery"; but it is rather my object to lead *to* these proverbial "has-beens." It has long been a tradition among Ted Babbitts and their contemporaries that English literature and, particularly, English composition courses are dry as dust. Once their belief was not without foundation; but now, to a great extent, it is no longer true. But the tradition still persists. It has been our aim, as teachers of composition and literature, to teach that literature expresses life, but our mistake has been that we have tried to teach that principle too much through the study of men in other ages

[1] *Babbitt*, p. 76.

whom our students cannot visualize, and not enough through men in the age in which they are living whom they can visualize. In the course of my teaching, I have met students like Ted who were rebellious against the "has-beens." I was very sorry, because I felt that they were losing some vital things; yet I knew, in a way, that they were right, because they were totally unprepared to meet these men and women of other centuries. Why, then, if they learn to understand those who speak their own language and voice the thoughts of their own age, will they not be better prepared to turn back and appreciate, not "has-beens," but human beings whose thoughts are sometimes strangely modern and whose characters are, after all, much like ourselves? And if these writers show their own admiration and respect for the stylists of other centuries, will they not help to open the eyes of our students to their value?

Moreover, in spite of all efforts to the contrary, textbooks often represent mere theory to the students, who fail to realize that the idea of learning to express themselves adequately is not peculiar to the textbooks and that real, living people with the desire to express *themselves* adequately wrote the "specimens" that they are reading. For them, a novel, a short-story, a drama, a poem, an essay exists without *raison d'être*. If it occurs to them at all that somebody wrote it, they have a mental picture of a being called a "genius," who, under a sort of trance called an "inspiration," produced a book, with no effort at all, or, if any effort, certainly not with as much as it takes to write a theme with its absurd requirements for revisions and rewriting. But the human being is primarily interested in human beings; and as soon as a student can see real people and real life behind books, he will be interested in literature as an expression of life, and he will be more interested in trying to express it himself.

With these problems in mind, I wrote to representative writers, appealing to them in behalf of the younger generation. The temerity with which I began my campaign, so to speak,

deserves some explanation. If my "confession" seems too personal, I hope it may be excused on the grounds that I am answering in print the questions that have come to me. I was then doing my first teaching in a university and was supremely aware of my own shortcomings and inexperience as a teacher. Who was I, I thought, to teach the art of writing? With the *naïveté* of a beginner I sat down and sent out an S. O. S. to people who knew how to write! I had no idea of a textbook then. I was, if you please, writing for the benefit of *my* classes. I did it without the knowledge of my university and without the realization, which I have had since, that these authors are plagued every day with the trivial requests of their admirers. My letters to these authors varied. The following is typical, and, also, explanatory of the large order that I gave:

> In planning my course of study for next fall, it occurred to me that stimulus and interest would be added to my classes in English composition if they could hear from you who know the importance of good writing and of diligent practice in acquiring it. They will accept your advice, because of the tangible evidence of your success; whereas, they are often disposed to be skeptical of textbook theory.
>
> In teaching English composition, particularly required composition courses, we meet two problems with these young people. In the first place, many of our students regard a course in rhetoric as a required thing to be done with as little effort as possible. They argue, "What is the use of studying composition? We can always be understood, even if we don't choose our words correctly or get our sentences just right." Their conception of you and of other writers is that of some superhuman beings who, now and then, receive from the heavens a suggestion called an inspiration and who, under its influence, write perfect and satisfactory copy at once! In the second place, not having any pride of language, they have no sense of values. They do not know anyone like Keats; they prefer "Whizz Bang" and "True Stories." Probably the reason is, simply, that their textbooks and their teachers represent to them mere theorists who are trying to force them to like something which, therefore, they are determined not to like. With the frankness of youth,

they say that they are not interested in "those old dubs who aren't alive any more."

My effort in teaching composition is to make my students interested in "the best that has been thought and said in the world" and the best that is being thought and said. I want them to develop a sense of values and a pride of language. They would like to hear from you, therefore, why one should learn to write well and whether your writing is a mere pastime done easily, under "an inspiration," and without any revision. And will you also tell them whom you enjoy reading most or whom you would recommend to students to read?

It has also occurred to me that this testimony could best be offered by your designating or submitting for study an example (whether a paragraph or a chapter) of what you consider your best writing with an explanatory or supplementary letter as to your methods, habits of writing, revisions, etc.

Such a study would have the result not only of stimulating these students to write well, but also of increasing their desire to read further into the works of writers whose examples have been submitted for their study, and thereby make them realize, far better than now, the precious heritage of the English language.

This seems like a pretty big order, but I do not want you to write a book for us! And, of course, if you haven't time for anything, we shall be very much disappointed. Will you not, therefore, accept this invitation to appear before my class and do for the students this great service?

The response and interest of the authors was at once amazing, considering how busy they are; and exceedingly interesting—so interesting, in fact, that I decided to pass on the information that they gave into this textbook. I wish to say again that the idea of a textbook occurred long after most of these letters came to me; since then, to make the book more complete, I have made other requests. I am deeply indebted to all of these kind people for their response and for the privilege they have given me of using their letters.

I wish to express my gratitude again to these authors who have been so very generous; and to their publishers who have given me consent for republication. I have made specific acknowledg-

ment to them in footnotes. I wish also to thank Miss Lillian Hart and Miss Dorothy Bonn for generous help that made the beginnings of this book possible; and likewise my friends in New Haven who graciously aided me in some necessary tasks that accompany any book in the making.

J. K. P.

Bloomington, Indiana,
August, 1930.

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AMONG EMINENT FORMAL ESSAYISTS

occurred but
~~happened~~ that ~~had~~ happened not because they ~~had~~ because it behooved
young people to know about them in order to understand
how they got that way"
~~the world their own times.~~

It is ~~clear~~ obvious that I have had large practice in putting briefly and ~~clearly and~~ pertinently what others had said ~~diffusely and darkly.~~ in ways ~~ways~~ diffuse and irrelevant

I have for many years used a type writer ~~to put down~~ before which I sit, making several false starts before I can bear to go on. A new start may be made later or two or three. The waste basket hides the shameful exposures of my incompetence. It took me five months to write an article on Civilization for the new Encyclopaedia. Then the sections were reordered and many changes made. Then new alteratio came
s in the galleys and only just now the last changes as the go in before
article is ~~to be~~ issued as a little volume. ~~as~~ Calvin remarks, one writes learning and learns writing. All careful writers appear to fuss interminably with their manuscript. Aspirants should learn to twist a paragraph
connective tissue
hither and thither, to ~~leave out and~~ add and chiefly to
leave out ~~some~~ bright but ~~discomposing~~ distracting ideas.
I can never ~~foretell~~ know what is going to happen, for the
best things that emerge cannot be forecast, ~~since~~ they
pop up from the depths
~~proceed from various deposits~~ under the over which
memory plays. It took me a full week to write the few introductory pages in the revised edition of The Humanizing of knowledge--perhaps only fifteen hundred words. That you might use as an illustration of my writing. I will send a copy but you will have to get Doran's permission to reprint.

Facsimile of part of the letter from James Harvey Robinson to the author appearing on the following pages.

ON CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS:

JAMES HARVEY ROBINSON

Historian and critic

As a lecturer, professor, and thorough scholar and student of history, Mr. Robinson has been an able author and editor of historical literature. His books are not confined to classroom use, for his ideas and manner of expression have been so interesting that the layman has read them. His *Mind in the Making* has been one of his most widely discussed books.

Mr. Robinson writes:

"As for myself, my first real book was a translation of some of Petrarch's Latin letters (1908, revised ed., 1914). I was greatly interested in the man who, with two or three exceptions, is the first human being of whose character we have had the materials to form a fair judgment. Then translation is one of the very best ways of improving one's style, since the material is furnished and one's whole attention can be devoted to its felicitous transference into one's own language. The essays contained in *The New History* (1912), *The Mind in the Making* (1922), and *The Humanizing of Knowledge* (1924, revised ed., 1926) all aimed to explain the indispensability of historical-mindedness in understanding the circumstances and prevalent notion of our own time.

"Meanwhile I was editing a long list of historical manuals for high schools and colleges, writing myself, collaborating and revising the work of others. My aim was to

eliminate dead matter, substitute living, and be very clear withal. By living matter I meant recalling things that have happened not because they occurred but because it behooved young people to know about them in order to understand how they got that way.

"It is obvious that I have had large practice in putting briefly and pertinently what others had said in ways diffuse and irrelevant.

"I have for many years used a typewriter before which I sit, making several false starts before I can bear to go on. A new start may be made later—or two or three. The wastebasket hides the shameful exposures of my incompetence. It took me five months to write an article on Civilization for the new Encyclopædia. Then came new alterations in the galleys and only just now the last changes go in before the article is issued as a little volume.

"Calvin remarks, 'one writes learning and learns writing.' All careful writers appear to fuss interminably with their manuscript. Aspirants should learn to twist a paragraph hither and thither, to add connective tissue, and chiefly, to leave out bright but distracting ideas. I can never know what is going to happen, for the best things that emerge cannot be forecast; they pop up from the depths over which memory plays. It took me a full week to write the few introductory pages in the revised edition of *The Humanizing of Knowledge*—perhaps only fifteen hundred words. That you might use as an illustration of my writing.

"Whatever merit my writing has is due to the fact that I can refuse to be hurried or to write about anything which does not excite me.

"It is just as hard to write at sixty-five as twenty-five—or nearly so."

—James Harvey Robinson.

CONFLICT OF AUTHORITY AND RESEARCH [1]

Man shares the earth and its bounty with hundreds of thousands of different kinds of animals which have during millions of years, each after its kind and in its own peculiar and ingenious fashions, made terms with their surroundings; lived, reproduced their species, and died. Compared with most of his fellow animals man has but recently appeared on the globe. In his bodily structure and native operations he has much in common with his nearer relatives, but in one respect he is unique. He is the only kind of animal capable of consciously setting to work to find out about himself and his world.

It took him, however, a long time to recognize this unique capacity in himself. Like other animals he learned something by just knocking about in the pursuit of a livelihood. He groped and fumbled, and sent out feelers, turning this way and that in his distresses and his wayward curiosity. Although he can hardly be said to have *looked for* new knowledge, he none the less *found* it, *malgré lui*, being the strange and promising creature he was. Having the equipment he had, he could not help finding out.

For hundreds of thousands of years the accumulation of human knowledge was accidental and incidental, exceedingly slow and precarious. But men learned to talk to one another, as no other animal had done, so that they could impart information and misinformation and pass them down from father to son and from mother to daughter. Finally, very recently, crude picturings grew into syllabic signs and letters, so that older knowledge, guesses and mistakes could be silently but effectively transmitted by writings to generations still unborn.

[1] From *The Humanizing of Knowledge*, pp. 17–22. Copyright 1923 and 1926 by Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc.

At last, some twenty-five hundred years ago, after much had been discovered accidentally and incidentally, it occurred to certain thoughtful men among the Greeks that things in general were much more mysterious than they had previously been considered to be, and that by looking into matters which roused their curiosity, and thinking hard and carefully, much that was new could be unearthed and brought to light. So they set to work consciously and of a purpose to enlarge the bounds of human knowledge. And so successful were they and such impressive results did they achieve by going after knowledge instead of waiting for it to come to them that they became objects of reverence to our Western world even down to the present day.

Indeed they did their job so well that in the end they hampered the growth of knowledge. For the greatest of all scholars and scientists, Aristotle, appeared, appointed by God's will to know everything, as the Arabic commentator Averroës claims. He became The Philosopher of the Middle Ages. His works seemed to neglect no field of possible knowledge. His summaries of earlier thought and his orderly, confident conclusions appeared to the scholars in the mediæval universities to be final and decisive. He seemed to have settled once for all innumerable fundamental truths so that there appeared to be little left for later generations but to understand him, interpret his sayings, and bring them into accord with the truths of Christianity presented in the voluminous works of the Fathers of the Church.

In spite of this illusion of the universities, important discoveries continued to be made from the thirteenth century onwards. About three hundred years ago those who had come to doubt the finality of the conclusions of the mediæval professors became eloquent in their protest against the bondage to "The Philosopher." They suspected that what had so long passed for truth was often no truth at all, and that there was an endless amount still to be discovered. They wrote works on how to seek truth and how to tell it when you found it. Of these the most permanent in their appeal are Bacon's *Advancement of*

Learning, Descartes' *Essay on Method*, and Milton's clarion *Areopagitica*, together with Locke's *On the Human Understanding*. The truth-seeker seemed once more at large and conscious of his freedom and aims. And, as might be expected, he began to replace old ideas with new, and to add altogether new ones, and that on the grand scale.

It was, however, about man's world rather than his own nature, origin, and doings that the most startling discoveries were made. Much, it is true, was revealed about the human body, and some little about the mind, but man's behavior was assumed to be already well understood and the principles for its guidance firmly established for good and all. This conviction was accepted not only by the multitude and its leaders, but by the students of "nature" themselves, and even by many philosophers. So the term "science" came to mean for most people our knowledge of other things than man. We can see easily enough that this attitude is a holdover from the Middle Ages, yea, from the old Stone Age. And the result is that since man's behavior has been, until the last few decades at least, exempt from scientific scrutiny, there is no field of reputed knowledge where dogmatism is more arrogant and ignorance more complacent. The following pages are not about natural science but about one aspect of human conduct, namely, our attitude toward knowledge and its increase.

Now and then one meets the expression "science-worship," which seems to be a somewhat peevish warning that we are taking the pursuit of knowledge too seriously. The Honorable Stephen Coleridge wrote a few years ago a whole volume on *The Idolatry of Science*. Mr. Bryan spent his dying efforts denouncing "scientists" and he well knew that he could count on the sympathy of a large portion of our people. There is really nothing surprising about this. It is just what might be expected.

"Science" is to most of us the discoveries which those with highly peculiar tastes make about stars, chemicals, and insects; sometimes curious and amusing and sometimes leading to practical inventions which may increase our comfort or

safety. But we are prone to view such odds and ends of knowledge as rather trivial and irrelevant to the serious concerns of life. And so they usually are, for it is hard to transmute scientific information of even the best quality into wisdom. Compared with our personal fears, our successes and humiliations, science as yet hovers on the outskirts of human preoccupations. Religious teachers have always maintained that we all know enough to be good, and politicians extol the untutored sagacity of the people at large. Moreover, we dread to see the cold eye of science casting about upon our warm loves and hates and questioning our intimate beliefs about ourselves and others. Yet for him that can see it, the scientific eye is not sinister; it may twinkle or even smile with encouragement in difficult passages and relieve perplexity by insight.

BERTRAND RUSSELL

Essayist and critic

Essayist and critic of life is perhaps more fully descriptive. Having read the Honorable Bertrand Russell's letter, the student will need no one to explain the amazing background and the *raison d'être* of this man's literary genius, nor to inspire him toward his own preparation as a man of letters or as a college man of culture.

Fearlessness, honesty, and independence in his opinions and the ability to express those opinions vividly in print have made Bertrand Russell a power to be felt, particularly in England where he has not always agreed with the social and political tendencies of his day. Among his chief concerns is an interest in education and, of course, in the "younger generation."

"I spent my youth in a cultivated old-fashioned atmosphere: Shakespeare and Scott were read to me till I was about twelve, and after that I had to read them out loud. Poets such as Cowper were still admired, and I read the whole of 'Task' aloud. Shelley and Keats I discovered for myself at the age of sixteen, and from then until I was twenty-one I read English poetry constantly, and learnt a great deal by heart. Most of my time, until I went to Cambridge, was spent alone in my grandfather's library. There I read Gibbon, Mill, Swift, Goethe, Heine, Racine, Corneille (I had been taught French and German in infancy); I taught myself Italian and read Dante and Machiavelli—all before the age of eighteen. Milton's prose influenced me greatly. After twenty-one, I was influenced

That period. But my natural taste in style, as regards prose, was always 17th century. I liked such men as Jeremy Taylor & Izaak Walton, & of course Sir Thomas Browne. You will see the 17th-century influences in my "Free Man's Worship", written in 1902. From the practice of reading aloud, I became sensitive to prose rhythms; I believe this practice to be invaluable for forming style. Gradually, as a result of a complex development, I have come to prefer the 18th century to the 17th; but it is still the early 18th century that I like best — Swift, & (in his way) Defoe. From the age of about 16 onwards, I formed the habit, in thought, of turning a sentence over & over in my mind, until I had a combination of brevity, clarity, & rhythm. I would do this with every idea that came into my head. Brevity, especially, I always greatly desired. I wrote very carefully, with many corrections, until I had passed the age of 30, i.e. down to & including the year 1902. After that, I felt that my style was formed, for good or evil. I now hardly ever make any corrections in a MS, beyond altering a word where there is an unintentional repetition. I think over a book before beginning to write, & when I begin the real work is finished.

Facsimile of part of the letter from Bertrand Russell to the author appearing on the accompanying pages.

by those who admired Flaubert and Walter Pater—the artistic popes of that period. But my natural taste in style, as regards prose, was always 17th century. I liked such men as Jeremy Taylor and Isaak Walton, and, of course, Sir Thomas Browne. You will see the 17th century influence in my 'Free Man's Worship,' written in 1902. From the practice of reading aloud, I became sensitive to prose rhythms; I believe this practice to be invaluable for forming style. Gradually, as a result of complex development, I have come to prefer the 18th century to the 17th century; but it is still the early 18th century that I like best—Swift and (in his way) Defoe. From the age of about sixteen onwards, I formed the habit, in thought, of turning a sentence over and over in my mind, until I had a combination of brevity, clarity, and rhythm. I would do this with every idea that came into my head. Brevity, especially, I always greatly desired. I wrote very carefully, with many corrections, until I had passed the age of thirty, *i.e.* down to and including the year 1902. After that, I felt that my style was formed, for good or for evil. I now hardly ever make any corrections in a manuscript, beyond altering a word where there is an unintentional repetition. I think over a book before beginning to write, and when I begin the real work is finished. Of course, I always compose each sentence in full in my head before beginning to write it out.

"As to what I think best in my own writing, 'A Free Man's Worship' is the best in one style, but it is a style which I have deliberately abandoned as too rhetorical. *Why Men Fight* (as it is called, without my consent, in America) is, I suppose, the best example of my newer style, though it still has echoes of the old manner, for instance the passage about thought near the end of the

chapter on Education. I still think this passage rather good. I wrote it after being stuck for an hour, and sitting all that time before a blank page. I think also that there is a rather good bit of writing at the beginning of my book *The Problem of China.* It is the end of the first chapter, beginning 'It was on the Volga in 1920,' or something like that.

"No one can doubt the importance of style who has ever had to explain difficult ideas or make propaganda for unpopular opinion. In France, this is generally recognized, with the result that French mathematical books, for instance, are vastly more intelligible than books of equal profundity by Englishmen or Germans. Style consists, fundamentally, not in ornament, but in following the reader's natural development—his breathing, as regards rhythm; his thought, as regards ideas. To ignore style is to make of life a succession of jolts and jars, a football scrimmage instead of a dance.

"As for reading, prose style can only be formed by reading good prose, but for modern use, it should not be too ornate. Jeremy Taylor may still be read, but hardly Milton's prose or Sir Thomas Browne. Swift is admirable; Lamb is good, but a trifle affected, owing to his passion for the 17th century. The Book of Common Prayer is perfect in its way—better even than the Authorised Version. Shakespeare's prose—for instance 'What a piece of Work is Man,' etc.—is perfect. I think some really good things should be learnt by heart. My experience was, when I was younger, that one unconsciously reproduced the rhythm of what one was reading."

—Bertrand Russell.

A FREE MAN'S WORSHIP [1]

To Dr. Faustus in his study Mephistopheles told the history of the Creation, saying:

"The endless praises of the choirs of angels had begun to grow wearisome; for, after all, did he not deserve their praise? Had he not given them endless joy? Would it not be more amusing to obtain undeserved praise, to be worshipped by beings whom he tortured? He smiled inwardly, and resolved that the great drama should be performed.

"For countless ages the hot nebula whirled aimlessly through space. At length it began to take shape, the central mass threw off planets, the planets cooled, boiling seas and burning mountains heaved and tossed, from black masses of cloud hot sheets of rain deluged the barely solid crust. And now the first germ of life grew in the depths of the ocean, and developed rapidly in the fructifying warmth into vast forest trees, huge ferns springing from the damp mould, sea monsters breeding, fighting, devouring and passing away. And from the monsters, as the play unfolded itself, Man was born, with the power of thought, the knowledge of good and evil, and the cruel thirst for worship. And Man saw that all is passing in this mad, monstrous world, that all is struggling to snatch, at any cost, a few brief moments of life before Death's inexorable decree. And Man said: 'There is a hidden purpose, could we but fathom it, and the purpose is good: for we must reverence something, and in the visible world there is nothing worthy of reverence.' And Man stood aside from the struggle, resolving that God intended harmony to come out of chaos by human efforts. And when he followed the instincts which God had transmitted to him from his ancestry of beasts of prey, he called it Sin, and asked God to forgive him. But he doubted whether he could be justly forgiven, until he invented a divine Plan by which God's wrath was to have been appeased. And seeing the present was bad, he made it yet worse, that thereby the future might be better. And he gave God thanks for the strength that enabled him to forego even the joys that were possible. And God smiled; and when he saw that Man had become perfect in

[1] From *Mysticism and Logic* by Bertrand Russell. Reprinted by permission of Longmans, Green and Company.

renunciation and worship, he sent another sun through the sky, which crashed into Man's sun; and all returned again to nebula.

"'Yes,' he murmured, 'it was a good play; I will have it performed again.'"

Such, in outline, but even more purposeless, more void of meaning, is the world which Science presents for our belief. Amid such a world, if anywhere, our ideals henceforward must find a home. That Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the débris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built.

How, in such an alien and inhuman world, can so powerless a creature as Man preserve his aspirations untarnished? A strange mystery it is that Nature, omnipotent but blind, in the revolutions of her secular hurryings through the abysses of space, has brought forth at last a child, subject still to her power, but gifted with sight, with knowledge of good and evil, with the capacity of judging all the works of his unthinking Mother. In spite of Death, the mark and seal of the parental control, Man is yet free, during his brief years, to examine, to criticise, to know, and in imagination to create. To him alone, in the world with which he is acquainted, this freedom belongs; and in this lies his superiority to the resistless forces that control his outward life.

The savage, like ourselves, feels the oppression of his impotence before the powers of Nature; but having in himself nothing

that he respects more than Power, he is willing to prostrate himself before his gods, without inquiring whether they are worthy of his worship. Pathetic and very terrible is the long history of cruelty and torture, of degradation and human sacrifice endured in the hope of placating the jealous gods: surely, the trembling believer thinks, when what is most precious has been freely given, their lust for blood must be appeased, and more will not be required. The religion of Moloch—as such creeds may be generically called—is in essence the cringing submission of the slave, who dare not, even in his heart, allow the thought that his master deserves no adulation. Since the independence of ideals is not yet acknowledged, Power may be freely worshipped, and receive an unlimited respect, despite its wanton infliction of pain.

But gradually, as morality grows bolder, the claim of the ideal world begins to be felt; and worship, if it is not to cease, must be given to gods of another kind than those created by the savage. Some, though they feel the demands of the ideal, will still consciously reject them, still urging that naked Power is worthy of worship. Such is the attitude inculcated in God's answer to Job out of the whirlwind: the divine power and knowledge are paraded, but of the divine goodness there is no hint. Such also is the attitude of those who, in our own day, base their morality upon the struggle for survival, maintaining that the survivors are necessarily the fittest. But others, not content with an answer so repugnant to the moral sense, will adopt the position which we have become accustomed to regard as specially religious, maintaining that, in some hidden manner, the world of fact is really harmonious with the world of ideals. Thus Man creates God, all-powerful and all-good, the mystic unity of what is and what should be.

But the world of fact, after all, is not good; and in submitting our judgment to it, there is an element of slavishness from which our thoughts must be purged. For in all things it is well to exalt the dignity of Man, by freeing him as far as possible from the tyranny of non-human Power. When we have re-

alized that Power is largely bad, that man, with his knowledge of good and evil, is but a helpless atom in a world which has no such knowledge, the choice is again presented to us: Shall we worship Force, or shall we worship Goodness? Shall our God exist and be evil, or shall he be recognised as the creation of our own conscience?

The answer to this question is very momentous, and affects profoundly our whole morality. The worship of Force, to which Carlyle and Nietzsche and the creed of Militarism have accustomed us, is the result of failure to maintain our own ideals against a hostile universe: it is itself a prostrate submission to evil, a sacrifice of our best to Moloch. If strength indeed is to be respected, let us respect rather the strength of those who refuse that false "recognition of facts" which fails to recognize that facts are often bad. Let us admit that, in the world we know, there are many things that would be better otherwise, and that the ideals to which we do and must adhere are not realized in the realm of matter. Let us preserve our respect for truth, for beauty, for the ideal of perfection which life does not permit us to attain, though none of these things meet with the approval of the unconscious universe. If Power is bad, as it seems to be, let us reject it from our hearts. In this lies Man's true freedom; in determination to worship only the God created by our own love of the good, to respect only the heaven which inspires the insight of our best moments. In action, in desire, we must submit perpetually to the tyranny of outside forces; but in thought, in aspiration, we are free, free from our fellowmen, free from the petty planet on which our bodies impotently crawl, free even, while we live from the tyranny of death. Let us learn, then, that energy of faith which enables us to live constantly in the vision of the good; and let us descend, in action, into the world of fact, with that vision always before us.

When first the opposition of fact and ideal grows fully visible, a spirit of fiery revolt, of fierce hatred of the gods, seems necessary to the assertion of freedom. To defy with Promethean

constancy a hostile universe, to keep its evil always in view, always actively hated, to refuse no pain that the malice of Power can invent, appears to be the duty of all who will not bow before the inevitable. But indignation is still a bondage, for it compels our thoughts to be occupied with an evil world; and in the fierceness of desire from which rebellion springs there is a kind of self-assertion which it is necessary for the wise to overcome. Indignation is a submission of our thoughts, but not of our desires; the Stoic freedom in which wisdom consists is found in the submission of our desires, but not of our thoughts. From the submission of our desires springs the virtue of resignation; from the freedom of our thoughts springs the whole world of art and philosophy, and the vision of beauty by which, at last, we half reconquer the reluctant world. But the vision of beauty is possible only to unfettered contemplation, to thoughts not weighted by the load of eager wishes; and thus Freedom comes only to those who no longer ask of life that it shall yield them any of those personal goods that are subject to the mutations of Time.

Although the necessity of renunciation is evidence of the existence of evil, yet Christianity, in preaching it, has shown a wisdom exceeding that of the Promethean philosophy of rebellion. It must be admitted that, of the things we desire, some, though they prove impossible, are yet real goods; others, however, as ardently longed for, do not form part of a fully purified ideal. The belief that what must be renounced is bad, though sometimes false, is far less often false than untamed passion supposes; and the creed of religion, by providing a reason for proving that it is never false, has been the means of purifying our hopes by the discovery of many austere truths.

But there is in resignation a further good element: even real goods, when they are unattainable, ought not to be fretfully desired. To every man comes, sooner or later, the great renunciation. For the young, there is nothing unattainable; a good thing desired with the whole force of a passionate will, and yet impossible, is to them not credible. Yet, by death, by

illness, by poverty, or by the voice of duty, we must learn, each one of us, that the world was not made for us, and that, however beautiful may be the things we crave, Fate may nevertheless forbid them. It is the part of courage, when misfortune comes, to bear without repining the ruin of our hopes, to turn away our thoughts from vain regrets. This degree of submission to Power is not only just and right: it is the very gate of wisdom.

But passive renunciation is not the whole of wisdom; for not by renunciation alone can we build a temple for the worship of our own ideals. Haunting foreshadowings of the temple appear in the realm of imagination, in music, in architecture, in the untroubled kingdom of reason, and in the golden sunset magic of lyrics, where beauty shines and glows, remote from the touch of sorrow, remote from the fear of change, remote from the failures and disenchantments of the world of fact. In the contemplation of these things the vision of heaven will shape itself in our hearts, giving at once a touchstone to judge the world about us, and an inspiration by which to fashion to our needs whatever is not incapable of serving as a stone in the sacred temple.

Except for those rare spirits that are born without sin, there is a cavern of darkness to be traversed before that temple can be entered. The gate of the cavern is despair, and its floor is paved with the gravestones of abandoned hopes. There Self must die; there the eagerness, the greed of untamed desire must be slain, for only so can the soul be freed from the empire of Fate. But out of the cavern the Gate of Renunciation leads again to the daylight of wisdom, by whose radiance a new insight, a new joy, a new tenderness, shine forth to gladden the pilgrim's heart.

When, without the bitterness of impotent rebellion, we have learnt both to resign ourselves to the outward rule of Fate and to recognize that the non-human world is unworthy of our worship, it becomes possible at last so to transform and refashion the unconscious universe, so to transmute it in the crucible of

imagination, that a new image of shining gold replaces the old idol of clay. In all the multiform facts of the world—in the visual shapes of trees and mountains and clouds, in the events of the life of man, even in the very omnipotence of Death—the insight of creative idealism can find the reflection of a beauty which its own thoughts first made. In this way mind asserts its subtle mastery over the thoughtless forces of Nature. The more evil the material with which it deals, the more thwarting to untrained desire, the greater is its achievement in inducing the reluctant rock to yield up its hidden treasures, the prouder its victory in compelling the opposing forces to swell the pageant of its triumph. Of all the arts, Tragedy is the proudest, the most triumphant; for it builds its shining citadel in the very centre of the enemy's country, on the very summit of his highest mountain; from its impregnable watch-towers, his camps and arsenals, his columns and forts, are all revealed; within its walls the free life continues, while the legions of Death and Pain and Despair, and all the servile captains of tyrant Fate, afford the burghers of that dauntless city new spectacles of beauty. Happy those sacred ramparts, thrice happy the dwellers on that all-seeing eminence. Honour to those brave warriors who, through countless ages of warfare, have preserved for us the priceless heritage of liberty, and have kept undefiled by sacrilegious invaders the home of the unsubdued.

But the beauty of Tragedy does but make visible a quality which, in more or less obvious shapes, is present always and everywhere in life. In the spectacle of Death, in the endurance of intolerable pain, and in the irrevocableness of a vanished past, there is a sacredness, an overpowering awe, a feeling of the vastness, the depth, the inexhaustible mystery of existence, in which as by some strange marriage of pain, the sufferer is bound to the world by bonds of sorrow. In these moments of insight, we lose all eagerness of temporary desire, all struggling and striving for petty ends, all care for the little trivial things that, to a superficial view, make up the common life of day by day; we see, surrounding the narrow raft illumined by the

flickering light of human comradeship, the dark ocean on whose rolling waves we toss for a brief hour; from the great night without, a chill blast breaks in upon our refuge; all the loneliness of humanity amid hostile forces is concentrated upon the individual soul, which must struggle alone, with what of courage it can command, against the whole weight of a universe that cares nothing for its hopes and fears. Victory, in this struggle with the powers of darkness, is the true baptism into the glorious company of heroes, the true initiation into the overmastering beauty of human existence. From that awful encounter of the soul with the outer world, enunciation, wisdom, and charity are born; and with their birth a new life begins. To take into the inmost shrine of the soul the irresistible forces whose puppets we seem to be—Death and change, the irrevocableness of the past, and the powerlessness of man before the blind hurry of the universe from vanity to vanity—to feel these things and know them is to conquer them.

This is the reason why the Past has such magical power. The beauty of its motionless and silent pictures is like the enchanted purity of late autumn, when the leaves, though one breath would make them fall, still glow against the sky in golden glory. The Past does not change or strive; like Duncan, after life's fitful fever it sleeps well; what was eager and grasping, what was petty and transitory, has faded away, the things that were beautiful and eternal shine out of it like stars in the night. Its beauty, to a soul not worthy of it, is unendurable; but to a soul which has conquered Fate it is the key of religion.

The life of Man, viewed outwardly, is but a small thing in comparison with the forces of Nature. The slave is doomed to worship Time and Fate and Death, because they are greater than anything he finds in himself, and because all his thoughts are of things which they devour. But, great as they are, to think of them greatly, to feel their passionless splendour, is greater still. And such thought makes us free men; we no longer bow before the inevitable in Oriental subjection, but we absorb it, and make it a part of ourselves. To abandon the struggle

for private happiness, to expel all eagerness of temporary desire, to burn with passion for eternal things—this is emancipation, and this is the free man's worship. And this liberation is effected by a contemplation of Fate; for Fate itself is subdued by the mind which leaves nothing to be purged by the purifying fire of Time.

United with his fellow-men by the strongest of all ties, the tie of a common doom, the free man finds that a new vision is with him always, shedding over every daily task the light of love. The life of Man is a long march through the night, surrounded by invisible foes, tortured by weariness and pain, towards a goal that few can hope to reach, and where none may tarry long. One by one, as they march, our comrades vanish from our sight, seized by the silent orders of omnipotent Death. Very brief is the time in which we can help them, in which their happiness or misery is decided. Be it ours to shed sunshine on their path, to lighten their sorrows by the balm of sympathy, to give them the pure joy of a never-tiring affection, to strengthen failing courage, to instil faith in hours of despair. Let us not weigh in grudging scales their merits and demerits, but let us think only of their need—of the sorrows, the difficulties, perhaps the blindnesses, that make the misery of their lives; let us remember that they are fellow-sufferers in the same darkness, actors in the same tragedy with ourselves. And so, when their day is over, when their good and their evil have become eternal by the immortality of the past, be it ours to feel that, where they suffered, where they failed, no deed of ours was the cause; but wherever a spark of the divine fire kindled in their hearts, we were ready with encouragement, with sympathy, with brave words in which high courage glowed.

Brief and powerless is Man's life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way; for Man, condemned to-day to lose his dearest, to-morrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts

that ennoble his little day; disdaining the coward terrors of the slave of Fate, to worship at the shrine that his own hands have built; undismayed by the empire of chance, to preserve a mind free from the wanton tyranny that rules his outward life; proudly defiant of the irresistible forces that tolerate, for a moment, his knowledge and his condemnation, to sustain alone, a weary but unyielding Atlas, the world that his own ideals have fashioned despite the trampling march of unconscious power.

STUART P. SHERMAN

Critic

There are a few in this list of eminent contemporaries whom we cannot afford to omit. Although their work is done as far as new publication is concerned, it is too timely to be ignored. A few years ago, America lost one of the most distinguished of its critics at a time when he was giving it the needed products of his genius. The beauty of Mr. Sherman's essays was—or rather is—the intellect, the keenness of insight, the scholarship, and the entertaining but polished style, behind the thing that he had to say. And the thing that he had to say was valuable because it was said by one who had arrived at superior critical judgment through years of training. He was no charlatan. He had studied life and literature deeply and with interest and profit. For a number of years he had taught freshmen and seniors and graduates at the University of Illinois. His teaching never became perfunctory; on the contrary, undergraduate or graduate always had his interest; and when there were signs of genius, he was the first to encourage it with the kindly criticism of his wisdom. He left the University of Illinois in 1924 to become the editor of *Books*, the literary supplement of the *New York Herald-Tribune*. Although he took up this new position with characteristic zest, he never lost his interest in academic things.

In lieu of what he might have said as a foreword to the selection of his writing, the following from the Introduction [1] to *Shaping Men and Women* is quoted:

"There ought to come a time in the life of every scholar when he builds his intellectual monument, when he gathers

[1] Copyright 1928 by Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc.

himself all up as completely as possible and expresses himself in a work which sums up his discoveries and his interests in the world. I believe in cultivating the idea of a *magnum opus* as the normal product—whether it be a dictionary, a grammar, a treatise on rhetoric, a study of Twelfth Century culture, the history of the essay, the history of oratory, criticism of contemporary American drama, or what not.—'Why do you write, if it costs you so much pain,' someone asked Gray. 'I like myself better when I do,' said Gray. There is the incentive: self-realization."

—Stuart P. Sherman.

THE SHIFTING CENTRE OF MORALITY:[1]

A Study of the Vulgar Tongue

> I say, beware of all enterprises that require new clothes, and not rather a new wearer of clothes. If there is not a new man, how can the new clothes be made to fit? If you have any enterprise before you, try it in your old clothes.
>
> —Thoreau.

> I do not mean to prescribe rules to strong and valiant natures, who will mind their own affairs whether in heaven or hell, and perchance build more magnificently and spend more lavishly than the richest, without ever impoverishing themselves.
>
> —Thoreau.

If Puritanism is, as I have been contending that it is, an essentially non-conforming spirit, then its most formidable adversary should be an essentially conforming spirit. And contrary to the general impression of the facts, the spirit in our present younger generation which is most deeply at variance with traditional Puritanism is not its sporadic rebelliousness but its prevailing readiness to conform. Current criticism, confining itself chiefly to manners and "minor morals," scents a revolt and a flying-off where a deeper consideration discovers rather a slavish conformity.

The social censors have been reporting lately, in high excitement, that our young people exhibit signs of moral deterioration, that they are already crowned with vine leaves and dancing like bacchants down the primrose way. When one corners a censor and demands point-blank what is wrong, one is not quite adequately answered. What one ordinarily receives is an impressionistic highly-colored account of the débutantes of the present year by a débutante of twenty-five years ago, who

[1] From *The Genius of America*. Reprinted by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

ejaculates her indignant "Why-my-dears!" over the vogue of rouge and jazz, the cigarettes and the cocktails, the partial emancipation of the lower (instead of only the upper) limbs, the unchaperoned drives by moonlight, and, in short, the extraordinary accessibility, the general "facility" of the buds. From among these ejaculations there emerges the central assurance of the censor, namely, that she was far, far more difficult to kiss than her neighbor's daughter is. An interesting contention, to which an enquirer of Hamlet's disposition will murmur: "Very like—very like."

To indict an entire generation on specific charges of this sort is never very convincing. The débutantes who appear at their coming-out parties in bacchantic garb and manners are but an inconsiderable element even in that expensively fashionable set which the Sunday supplement recognizes as Society. And Society itself is but an inconsiderable element in the significant young life of any generation. A small group, flushed and festive, which loves to skirt the perilous verge of decorum, and hang a bit over the edge—such a group is always with us, as any one may easily persuade himself by turning the pages of his Juvenal or his Petrarch or even by running through the files of an illustrated New York weekly from 1860 to 1890. On the basis of rouge and "rag-time" and startling ups and downs of feminine apparel, the ultimate decline of civilization has probably been predicted every thirty years since the time of Queen Semiramis.

The historically-minded critic will be slow to assert that the manners and morals of our younger generation are, on the whole, any worse than those of the older generation, or any better. Yet he may still insist that they are significantly different. For the tendency of young people is to react against both the virtues and the defects of their elders. The father is a hard drinker but the son in disgust resolves not to touch a drop—that sometimes happens. Or the mother reads *The Ladies Home Journal* and the daughter, *The Liberator:* that also happens. This sort of alternation is not invariable; yet, as we say, an excess in one direction tends to produce an excess in the oppo-

site direction. And between one generation and the next morality does sometimes shift its centre.

Morality has two principal centres.

At one period, we have a morality of which the centre is within the individual. It works from within outward. It holds, like Christianity, that its prime concern is to touch the heart and quicken the conscience and give the right direction to the will. If the heart be right, say the exponents of this morality, right conduct will follow. One does not look to the world for approval; one endeavors to satisfy the inner monitor. One's own standards of right and wrong are more severe than anything that can be imposed from outside. Therefore one takes for a motto: "Trust thyself. To thine own self be true; thou canst not then be false to any man." If you get morality effectively planted at the centre of a man, he does right though no one is looking. He does right though the heavens fall.

The high tendency of this personal morality is to produce a man like Emerson, notable for independence, depth, poise, and serenity. Its low tendency is to produce a sentimentalist like Rousseau, whose "beautiful soul" is dissociated from his mundane and muddy behaviour.

At another period, we have a morality of which the centre is outside the individual. It is felt as a social pressure, working from without inward. It is primarily concerned, like ancient Judaism and like all systems of etiquette with the regulation of external conduct and manners. When this type of morality predominates, if the actions of a man are right and his manners correct, no one worries much about the condition of his feelings. Act right and right feelings will follow; or if they don't, it doesn't much matter. The watch-words are: "Do as the rest do. Conform to established ways. Follow the rules and regulations."

The high tendency of a purely social morality is to cultivate the graces and amenities, and so to produce an urbane and highly polished gentleman like Lord Chesterfield. Its low tendency is to finish the surfaces of character without touching

the inward parts, so that the effect upon a sensitive observer, in the case of Talleyrand, was like that of "a silk stocking filled with mud." And an unfriendly critic remarked even of Chesterfield that he taught the "morals of a courtesan and the manners of a dancing master."

Yet let us not forget that this social morality has its merits. It has, above all, a definite method, a perfected technique, for laying hold the raw uncultivated man and smoothing his surfaces and adjusting his external conduct to an external standard. Everyone has perhaps heard of that lady who always walked into church with such a heavenly smile about her lips that observers thought she must be meditating on some beatific vision, till a friend, more curious than the rest, asked her how she did it. She explained away the mystery by declaring that all she did was to shape her lips, when she entered the church door, as if she were about to utter the word "spruce." The sequel tells how the friend thought to beautify her own expression by the same technique; but she was stopped in the middle of the aisle and was asked in horror, by an acquaintance, what ailed her. She, much chagrined, explained that she was merely trying the formula which had made the beatific lady look so entrancing. "For heaven's sake," cried the neighbor, "what is it?" "Why," she replied, "as I come in the door, I simply shape my lips as if to utter the word 'hemlock.'"

Both these ladies illustrate very well what I mean by the externality of the method.

At the present time, our ordinary young people are cultivating the external, the socially-centered type of morality. The individual would rather go wrong with the crowd than right by himself. He has a horror of being in any sense alone. He is almost painfully anxious to do as the rest do. Even his "eccentricities" are stereotyped and fashionable. He "revolts" by regiments. Three distinct forces tend to fortify this social morality in a position of predominance over the younger generation: popular philosophy, military discipline, and women.

In the first place, all the popular psychologists are physiol-

ogists, looking upon man as merely a nervous organism; and all the popular philosophers are pragmatists, behaviourists, etc., and occupy themselves with the actions and reactions, the responses and inhibitions of this nervous automaton. For them there is no spiritual centre. For them there is really no inside to personality. Everything is valued in terms of visible behaviour. Everything gets its meaning and significance in a network of external relations. Intelligently or otherwise, our young people seize upon current philosophy to help them construct an entire universe for themselves which shall have no "insides." In the violence of their reaction against the idealism and inwardness of their fathers, they rejoice in their intention of living on the surface of things. They will get rid of what their fathers called sin by getting rid of what their fathers called the soul.

The heroine of current fiction has no soul—she has not even a heart; she has only a nervous system. She has no spiritual crises—she has not even emotional crises; she has only nervous reactions. Our popular novelists—our Floyd Dells and Rose Macauleys, and W. L. Georges and Sinclair Lewises and McFees—never present their heroines in the grip of any such grand passions as shattered the heroines of the Brontë sisters. And yet these modern young women go through far more experiences than Charlotte Brontë ever dreamed it possible for any girl to have. Experiences which would have made the whole of life for Jane Eyre, experiences which would have raised her to rapture or cast her into the nethermost hell,—our modern heroine goes through these at a week-end, and brushes them aside "without batting an eyelid"—as she would say.

The philosophic movement towards an "external" moral centre has doubtless been greatly accelerated by a second force the full consequences of which we are just beginning to feel. It is hardly questionable that army discipline and, perhaps even more, the immense "drives" to which we were subjected in our recent embattled period did much towards establishing in the younger generation its profound deference for this external morality. We hear much about the few dissenters who did not

subscribe nor conform, and we hear much about the many honest patriots who did subscribe and conform. But we have had very little study of the effect of military discipline and "drives" upon the vast intermediate mass of unformed plastic young people, practically destitute of individual convictions, who were equipped overnight, by a power not themselves, with uniform convictions and uniform conduct with respect to all manner of subjects which they had never considered.

That abrupt and convulsive shifting of responsibility for belief and conduct from the individual to an organized power outside the individual had its great merits. It frequently clothed the stark naked. But like the asylum that receives the pauper, like the infallible and omniscient church that embraces a thinking soul, it had compensations which were dangers. If you were not in a position of leadership, you had to initiate and decide nothing. You did what the rest did; and you were "all right." Your scruples were cancelled with a rubber stamp. If doubts pursued you, you took refuge in the crowd, which covered you and shaped you. And you quite forgot that old individualistic maxim: "We sink as easily as we rise through our sympathies."

How the newly augmented powers of women and their quickened class consciousness will affect the situation in the future remains to be seen; but all experience indicates that these new powers and this quickened class consciousness will tend to fortify the alliance of popular philosophy and military discipline against a personal and internally centered morality. Women in masses are, or always have been, servile under the tyranny of social opinion, and subject to a very gross superstition. Whenever two or three of them are gathered together, the great goddess They is in the midst of them with Her arrogant foot on their necks. There is no woman's club or tea or sewing circle or even domestic fireside where Her voice is not heard and where Her words are not solemnly quoted as oracles, ending with absolute finality all masculine dissent.

It is perhaps within the domestic circle that the tyranny of this deity is most ruthlessly imposed and substituted for the free and natural dictates of the private heart. I will illustrate

the procedure. The average man might conceivably dispute, let us assume, with his own wife on fairly equal terms. He has devoted the better part of a lifetime to studying her special tactics and strategems, and knows how to meet them. But the average man is never permitted by a really intelligent wife to carry on any dispute with her. The moment that he begins an argument she softly steps aside—or more accurately, sidesteps—and "quotes Scripture," quotes this Hydra-headed monster, Whom it is sacrilege to mention by any other designation than the capitalized third person plural.

At the domestic fireside, argument, as distinguished from conviction, usually begins in a man's soul. In the intimate simplicity of his heart, moved only by considerations of comfort, personal taste, or the family budget, a man will begin thus:

"I believe, Dorothy, we'd better have another electric light put in the dining room, so that we can see a little better what we are taking in."

She will reply: "Oh, no, my dear; we'll do nothing of the sort. They are using candles now."

Or he will begin: "Well, Dotty old dear, I guess the old car will serve us another season, won't it?"

And she: "Why, John, how can you think so? It's quite impossible. They are using closed cars now."

Or the poor man will open a fireside rumination thus: "Do you know, Dorothy, when Kitty's in high school—"

And she will cut in: "But Kitty is not going to the high school. You are absurd. You know perfectly well that They are sending Their girls away to school now."

Such are the interventions of the great goddess They, trampling rough-shod over the inclinations and powers of the private life. And such is the worship of her, instituted daily on a more and more imposing scale as a large class of timid idolaters becomes a potent organized force in the determination of standards.

Under the combined pressure of philosophy, military discipline, and feminine superstition, the younger generation has been driven to conceive of virtue as merely a facile adjustment to the existing environment. It believes to an excessive degree

in certain "standardized" ways of making the adjustment. The resulting phenomena have their comic aspects and their grave aspects, which I shall now explore a little according to a method suggested by this profound aphorism of Stevenson's: "Man lives not by bread alone; but mostly by catchwords." All that is most efficacious in the morality of our time is condensed in its catchwords. I shall hunt for the missing soul of the younger generation by following the bits of slang it has dropped in its flight.

"Abandon hope of social success," I read in an organ of youth a few months ago, "unless you have a car and a 'line.'" For days I enquired in vain of my co-evals the meaning of the word "line." But the moment I asked a young man of the new times whether he understood it, he laughed, and explained that a "line" is a complete set of conversational openings and ready-to-wear speeches, practically committed to memory and rehearsed for use on all typical social occasions. If you have a "line," you are not at a loss when the door opens, or in the ten minutes' talk with the family or the chaperone, or at any of the difficult transitional moments in your Napoleonic progress from the first dance to the last goodnight.

"It is all right," said my informant, "if you don't go to the same place too often."

I mused on a number of things of which I had read or heard, including the training of a successful book agent, before I thought of the obvious solution. Then I said: "It sounds like F. Scott Fitzgerald."

"It is like him," he replied. "They all study his stuff—get it by heart. He has the best 'line' going."

I ended my lesson with the understanding that "line" is short for lifeline, a device by which one avoids the danger of misstepping into the deep water which R. L. Stevenson commended to a former generation of students as "truth of intercourse."

This self-distrust of the new generation, this clinging to the social lifeline, this reliance upon external means of grace, is not confined to undergraduates. It pervades the younger society. It is openly recognized and played upon, for instance, in those

popular and entertaining magazines which undertake to teach the newly-rich to spend their money as if they had been rich a long time. "Buy a car," advises a canny caterer to democracy, "which will give you that comfortable sense of superiority." O superlative car! "Here are garments," cries another, "which will put you perfectly at ease in any society." O magical garments! Finally consider a full-page advertisement (in a radical journal which scoffs at decorum) of a book on etiquette, running about like this: "If you spilled a plate of soup in the lap of your hostess, should you apologize profusely, or should you pass over the incident in silence?—Buy this book and find out."

If that old censor of social morals, Thoreau, could visit us and inspect these pages, one can imagine him muttering in his Diogenes' beard:

"Could not a man who really possessed 'a comfortable sense of superiority'—could he not walk? or, if necessary, consider buying a car within his means and adequate to his needs? wear his clothes till they were easy? and, when he spilled the soup, speak what words of consolation God put into his heart?" But Thoreau was of a former generation which sought its comfortable sense of superiority within, rather than in that "ceaseless striving after smartness in clothing," observed by William McFee's London sailor lad as a distinction of the New York man-in-the-street.

Ten thousand finger-posts point the younger generation the way to enter the race for external "distinction," the way to Vanity Fair—ten thousand finger-posts to one honest old-fashioned pilgrim who assures them that it is the privilege of the truly superior man to do what he pleases and what suits his own sense of fitness, simply and nonchalantly. How do heroes converse? "Won't you have a cup of tea?" says King Haakon. "By George, your Majesty," says Mr. Roosevelt, "the very thing I'd like!" You won't find that reply in any book of etiquette; yet it suited the occasion well enough. In general those who always stand on their dignity have nothing else to stand on. It is not the prime minister but the secretarial underlings who step starchily out in frock coats and top hats. Their chief

bolts from his office in sack coat and nondescript felt. He has risen above his tailor.

Carlyle had a contemptuous word for all that "superiority" which one can buy at the store: he called it "gigmanity." It is a word that should be taught to our young people as a charm against infatuation with the external show of things. Carlyle found his word in the records of a criminal case. Said a witness: "I have always considered the defendant a respectable man." "What do you mean, sir," queries the judge, "by a respectable man?" "Why, your honor," replied the witness, "he keeps a gig." We have substituted for the gig a more elaborate vehicle in which one may ride to respectability—a very smooth-riding vehicle which to be perfectly respectable, should be equipped, according to current standards, with a lap-robe of Chinese civet cat lined with velvet, and an electrically lighted accessories case of gold and pearl.

But consider now a little more closely the young person who expects to be put at ease by a car, a suit of clothes, and book of etiquette—all of which he recognizes as superior to himself. Follow him to college, whither he is sure to be impelled by his self-distrust and his naïve confidence in a prescribed routine. No organ within him craves intellectual food; but something without him, a continuous social whisper, has suggested that there is salvation in a bachelor's degree. College life is a kind of select soirée, at which it will give him "a comfortable sense of superiority" merely to be seen. By him we explain why academic culture does not "take." With him in our eye, we expound a curious phrase in wide use among undergraduates.

Every year I talk with a considerable number of young persons, about to enter the junior and senior classes, concerning their program of studies; and I regularly begin by asking what they are doing in certain prescribed subjects, such as foreign languages. Quite regularly seven out of ten of them answer, with a happy smile and a reminiscent sigh: "Thank goodness, I worked *off* my French and German last year."

To which I regularly and hopelessly retort: "But have you worked *up* your German? Have you worked *in* your French?

We don't require you to take them for the look of the thing. Can you use them?"

And they quite regularly respond: "Oh, no! We don't expect to use them. We merely took them to *work off* group-requirements."

My feigned surprise that they should think us here "for the look of the thing" is an echo, by the way, of Mr. Kipling, who as much as any living writer, gave the tone to undergraduate life twenty years ago. Under the spur of his Indian tales and verse, we talked a good deal in those times about doing the "day's work" without excuses. It was the mode then to admire "men who do things." And so our blood was stirred by Mr. Kipling's hard-mouthed bridge-builder haranguing his shiftless Hindus: "Sons of unthinkable begetting, children of unspeakable shame! Are we here for the look of the thing?"

It is at least twenty years since I read that passage; and yet it vibrates still in the memory with an authority which nothing of Mr. F. Scott Fitzgerald's quite possesses. I will present, on the other hand, a bit of recent dialogue from life, which sounds in my ears like a current tune, expressing the spirit of a new generation which candidly admits that it is here "for the look of the thing."

At registration time in the fall a very sweet girl from Georgia with a soft southern voice and soft southern eyes, fringed like jessamine or honeysuckle, came to me as registration officer, and asked me to waive a college rule in her favor.

"I am very sorry," I said, with customary mild severity, "I can't let you do it. I have no authority in the matter."

"Well," she replied, "who has? Who can?" And she looked into my eyes with searching and almost painful sweetness.

"You might," I said, faltering, "you might go to the Dean. A Dean is the only one that breaks rules. You might ask him, but I doubt if it will do you any good. Our Dean is a very firm man. He's a New Englander, you know, a Puritan, with a stiff conscience."

"Tell me something," she said softly, "will you?"

"Yes," I replied, "if I can." I was ready to do anything for her, short of breaking the rule.

"Is this Dean of yours a bachelor or a married man?"

"A bachelor," I answered, "a bachelor of forty."

"Oh, that's all right," she cried gaily, as she gathered up her papers, "I'll *fix* him."

If, now, you take the spirit of this fair Georgian and mould it a little under the pressures of the hour, you produce an outstanding type of the recent feminine "arrivals" in business. She will get on. If she had a shade less of adaptability and a shade more of "soul," she would have her difficulties.

I had recently an instructive conversation with a charming and thoroughly refined young woman, who, moved by the impulse of her time, was seeking "economic independence," and had taken her initial steps in the business world. I asked her what she had learned from her professional life. "The most important thing that I have tried to learn," she replied instantly but without much gusto, "is how to sell myself."

I wish I could say that the vile phrase struck me as shocking. But how can one be shocked any longer, whose ears have rung these half-dozen years with phrases struck at the same mint, "slogans" of the "nation-wide" "campaigners," "selling charity," "selling art," "selling the war," "selling patriotism," "selling the flag," "selling the church—yours in business for the Lord," "selling" things visible and things invisible, whatever is now for sale in the heavens above or the waters under the earth—and everything is for sale. Such is the idiom of their souls.

At the present moment "production" is looked upon as an undertaking for old men. Salesmanship is the one career that kindles the imaginations and genius of the young. It is a perfectly respectable career for one who has something valuable to sell.

We touch now on what is most dangerously wrong in the moral incentives and tendencies of the younger generation. Its one categorical imperative, "Learn to sell yourself," means, being

interpreted, "Get your value recognized by society." Publicity managers, business psychologists, sales-engineers, and their kind and kindred, who are legion, have made the atmosphere of our times tense with pressures upon every young person to get his value recognized. If a new popular religion were founded today, the first book of its gospel would undoubtedly treat of the psychology of salesmanship. The spirit of this gospel has already invaded the void left by the new universe constructed with no "insides." The young person responds with an intoxication, seldom sobered by any consideration whatever of the really quite primary questions whether he has any value, and, if not, whether by dint of some old-fashioned exertion, he may acquire some. The emphasis of the selling-slogan is, at least for a young generation, off: it just misses the head of the nail and strikes with a resounding whack close beside it. Only the attentive notice that it is all noise with no honest drive.

The young person who is inspired to "sell" himself is encouraged by every pressure of his times to concern himself with only one thing, namely, "How to put it across." He hears on all sides that what he is to put across is of small consequence. He need not give himself much anxiety, if he is a teacher or preacher about what he is to teach or preach; nor, if he is a journalist or author or artist, about what he is to write or paint.

Efficiency in a universe of salesmen demands no special training or learning in any field whatever, save one—the technique of "touch." If you haven't the touch, you are "Out." If you have the "touch," you are "It." This technique is heaven's free gift to the happy mortal who is born "a good mixer," facile and suave in surface contacts. But it is also masterable by those unintrospective wits, who, wasting no time in meditating either their subject or their object, consider only their "objective," and therefore dedicate their days and their nights to the study of their public, their audience, their clientele.

Learned men in the universities are rapidly establishing the "technique of touch," on universal principles, applicable to all relations between the salesman and the public, from the market-

ing of short stories to transactions in gold brick. When this new science is perfected, it bids fair to displace ethics, logic, and the other elements of our bankrupt philosophy. For those who have acquired the new learning, those who have the "touch," prosper. They "get away with it." They "put it across."

Under the new system, success in life is felicitously described as "getting by." This modest expression indicates that our hero, though slightly elated by his efficiency, is no enthusiast. He is, on the contrary, just beneath his fine surface, a cynic. Knowing the hollowness of his interior, he does not respect himself. Suspecting that those with whom he traffics are equally hollow, he does not respect his public. His criterion of success implies acknowledgment that he is a fraud and his public a fool, who will pass him without challenge provided only that he "puts up a good front." It is understood that I am portraying one whom the "band-wagon" carries to the end of the road.

When I seek for an incarnate symbol of what the virtues of our young generation become when they are pushed to excess, I recall one of its representatives who burst upon us one summer evening in a crowded train coming out of Washington. We were standing, some twenty of us, tired and hungry, jammed in the hot throat of the dining-car, waiting earnestly yet orderly for our turn at a seat. Just as one was vacated, in from the next coach dashed a youth of twenty-one, immaculate in white flannels, chin aloft and eyes hard ahead, like a picture drawn in the old days by Mr. C. D. Gibson for the late R. H. David. With a perfectly lordly gesture of the hand, as of one clearing the way of Rupert of Hentzau, and with a quiet but imperative "I beg your pardon," that handsome, that plausible, youth actually tried to break through the wedge of those twenty weary mortals and take that seat for himself. Shameful to relate, the wedge melted before him; he got by—almost to the head of the line, before an iron arm barred the passage, and a firm humorous voice exclaimed: "No, you don't, my boy! You'll have to work your way up, like the rest of us." Whereat that immaculate young importance, instantly collapsing, slunk and

wriggled to the rear, while the twenty murmured to one another, "Where did he get that stuff?"

My illustrative personage, real and at the same time symbolical, obviously got his "stuff" from a society excessively dependent for its superiority upon car-makers, tailors, and books of etiquette. The morality of his period has worked upon my hero from without inward, but has not penetrated far. At the center, where the master should sit, there is a space without form and void. He has nothing, morally speaking, of his own. The time-spirit has clothed him in specious appearances. He travels upon credit which was accumulated in other days, when the Gibson chin was the outward sign of an inward determination. He is, therefore, in the figurative, and probably also in the literal, sense, "living beyond his means."

I will hazard a guess that at college he studied a "line," "worked off" his French, and attained in his studies a passing mark, which is now generally known as a "gentleman's grade." At the same time he lived softly in a palatial fraternity house contributed by over-indulgent alumni, who themselves paid for their barracks accommodations in the old dormitory by tending furnaces, and the like. He had had his father's car at his disposal since his early 'teens. Naturally when he went to college, he required it still for transit from fraternity house to classroom and for dances and week-end parties. Of course, if one has a good car, one must live up to one's car.

And so the Old Man, half in pity for his own austere youth, saw his son through in a style that he did not allow himself after a lifetime of industry and thrift. "When my boy gets out in the world," the Old Man had said, "he'll have to shift for himself; but we'll give him a start with the best of them. Yes, sir, with the best of them!"

I will guess also that our young man is now in the employ of a corporation with very handsome offices, which gives him an apprentice's wage, sufficient to pay installments on his tailor's bill, while it authorizes an expense account allowing and encouraging him to enjoy the clubs, hotels, and costly little pleas-

ures of big business men. All his life he has had unearned advantages thrust upon him; he takes them quite as a matter of course. He has always spent other people's money freely. Now it is a matter of duty to put on all the "side" that he can. He must eat and dress and drive in a fashion to "get in touch" with men whose income tax many times exceeds his income. Under the circumstances, it is altogether too soon to think of laying anything by. If he attempted that, he would have to "drop out of the running." He has, however, "invested" in an automobile, upholstered with the elegance of a parlor, and is asking his landlord to trust him for the last month's rent.

If he "puts it across" to a girl, formed on the same system—as I think he soon will—she, in her turn, will clutch at the "line" she has been taught. She will demand the right to be married without a ring, to retain her own name, to be secure from the expectation of children, to be allowed to pursue her own career, and to be guaranteed a "good time." To all of which demands he will yield ready assent. They will have a highly expensive engagement and a still more expensive wedding and honeymoon; and they will then attempt to "jolly things along" together.

They will find that they are unable to keep house comfortably in his upholstered car. He will discover that a modern establishment for two is, in spite of all that our grandmothers used to say, more difficult to swing than bachelor's quarters. It will appear that she is quite his equal as a spender. At first he may hope for some relief from the proceeds of that independent career which he has agreed to allow her to pursue. But he will learn very shortly that the kind of girl who stipulates for a marriage exempt from all the responsibilities of the traditional union becomes the kind of wife that puts all that she can lay hands on upon her own back, and yet leaves it more than half uncovered. She had been trained to dress and display herself for the kind of a man that he is. But he is not quite equal to the task of maintaining the kind of a woman that she is. In two years or less, he will be single again and bankrupt—or an advertising manager on twenty thousand a year.

I add the alternative; because he may "get by." But a generation with a market tendency towards the production and heroization of such figures and figurantes should beware of pressing its tendencies too far. "The gods creep up on feet of wool." A spending generation which trades on the moral and material accumulations of its predecessors, presently finds its stock exhausted. And though for a time, by its mastery of "touch" it may still sell water and market wind, in the long run it will not get by with that stuff.

ALDOUS HUXLEY

Novelist, short-story writer, essayist

Grandson of Thomas Henry Huxley and grand-nephew of Matthew Arnold is Aldous Huxley. With such distinguished ancestry, one might be expected to have inherited the ability to say anything lucidly and Mr. Aldous Huxley has this talent, though in his own way.

Mr. Huxley is among "the cleverest of young English novelists," a seeker of out-of-the-way places and things (see his *Along the Road*), and a brilliant young critic. With a friendly insight and no prejudiced viewpoint, he has studied America and has written some significant conclusions in his "Outlook for American Culture."

"My own ambition in teaching English has never risen higher than this: to teach my pupils to write grammar and sense in the fewest and least pretentious words. The great danger now is the journalistic habit of using long, pretentious, abstract words, lumped together in formless, doughy sentences. May I suggest to you an excellent example which you would give your students of good and bad writing on rather similar themes? Take Benjamin Kidd's *Principles of Western Civilization* and select from it at random almost any passage . . . the whole book is almost uniformly bad as writing, though its ideas are often good . . . and place it in juxtaposition with a passage from Burke's writings on the French Revolution, say the extremely noble passage on the indissolubility of the social

contract. Kidd is about as bad as modern journalistic writing can be; he is a perfect example of how not to express abstract ideas. Burke, on the other hand, is about as good as anything in that kind can be."

—Aldous Huxley.

THE OUTLOOK FOR AMERICAN CULTURE[1]

Some Reflections in a Machine Age

I

The future of America is the future of the world. Material circumstances are driving all nations along the path in which America is going. Living in the contemporary environment, which is everywhere becoming more and more American, men feel a psychological compulsion to go the American way. Fate acts within and without; there is no resisting. For good or for evil, it seems that the world must be Americanized. America is not unique; she merely leads the way along the road which the people of every nation and continent are taking. Studying the good and the evil features in American life, we are studying, in a generally more definite and highly developed form, the good and evil features of the whole world's present and immediately coming civilization. Speculating on the American future, we are speculating on the future of civilized man. If I were a prophet, I would describe that future, would say whether it was to be rosy or dark. But lacking the prophetic eye, I can only guess. And even of guessing I shall be chary. I shall confine myself mainly to a safer and, on the whole, a more profitable task. Prophecies of the future, if they are to be intelligent, not merely fantastic, must be based on a study of the present. The future is the present projected.

Every present event or existence possesses some sort of significance, however small, for the future. If I turn on the gas to boil my morning's coffee, that means that the world's coal supply will be exhausted some minute fraction of a second before it would have been exhausted if I had not turned on the gas.

[1] Reprinted by permission of the author from *Harper's Magazine*, August, 1927, pp. 265–272.

And so on. Literally everything in the present has some significance for the future. The prophet must make a selection of the facts that are most significant, that will have the greatest effect on the greatest number of future human beings. Even the greatly significant facts are very numerous. To discuss them all one would have to write volumes; one would have to possess the most varied kinds of special knowledge. Lacking both space and knowledge, I am forced to make an arbitrary selection from the mass of significant materials. I shall discuss in the most general terms a few of the great facts of contemporary life—machinery, political and social institutions, education—showing the ways in which these things affect and are likely to go on affecting the inner life of man, how we may expect them to be modified, and with what results. I shall try to show the potentialities for good and evil implicit in the contemporary facts and how these potentialities may be expected to develop into future actuality.

The benefits conferred by machinery on the human race are too well known to need a long description. Machinery has made possible the payment of a higher wage for shorter hours and less drudgery. Thanks to machinery, the common man enjoys to-day an amount of leisure undreamed of by his predecessors, lives, and brings up his family in a style which would have seemed to them almost princely. Leisure and prosperity (at any rate in moderate quantities) are good in themselves; it is right that the animal in man should be well fed, comfortable, and not over-worked. But, good in themselves, leisure and prosperity are still better for what they make possible. For those who desire such things, they make possible the acquisition of culture, they permit of life being lived on its highest levels. Not that they automatically produce these blessings. It is as well to insist on this, since some enthusiasts for progress seem to imagine that wealth and leisure result in the higher life as surely as intense cold results in ice. The most superficial study of history shows that they do not. At the most, they make the higher life possible for those who want to live it. Whether the

possibility will be realized in fact depends, of course, on the individual taste and the social environment.

The progress in mechanical invention has given something more than wealth and leisure. Cheap and rapid transport has enormously enlarged the human horizon. Travel, in the past, was a luxury which only the very rich could afford. The majority of men and women were born, lived, and died in the same place. They inhabited a universe ten miles wide; beyond its borders lay the unknown. To-day even the poor can take small journeys; the moderately prosperous are familiar with whole continents. The mind is nourished by its impressions from without; to enlarge one's physical world is to enrich one's mind. Machinery, in the form of modern transport, is providing for larger and even larger numbers of human beings a form of liberal education.

Nor must we forget the more direct educational contributions of machinery. Efficient methods of printing have made possible the dissemination of information and ideas on an unprecedented scale. Knowledge of the visual arts can be spread by means of cheap-process reproduction. Music can be recorded and reproduced with extraordinary verisimilitude by the phonograph. And every form of noise, from the political speech to the symphony concert, from the jazz band to the sermon, can be broadcast over a continent. Machinery, then, has created leisure and multiplied the number of impressions which men and women can receive. Universal leisure and variety of impressions make possible a rich universal culture. Machinery has set up a tendency towards the realization of fuller life.

II

Now for the reverse of the medal. I have been careful to insist that leisure makes culture possible, but does not automatically create it. Machinery has brought leisure to America and the rest of the Western world, and that leisure will certainly tend to increase. But can we honestly say that this leisure has given birth to a corresponding culture, or that there are any

clear signs that culture is destined to spread in the immediate future? We cannot. Leisure makes culture possible; but this possible culture has not in fact become actual. Let me advise anyone who believes in the near approach of the social millennium to go to any great American or European city and note what the majority of men and women do with their new-found prosperity and leisure.

That increased leisure does not lead to increased culture among the leisured is due to two main causes, one hereditary and the other environmental. A great many men and women—let us frankly admit it, in spite of all our humanitarian and democratic prejudices—do not want to be cultured, are not interested in the higher life. For these people existence on the lower, animal levels is perfectly satisfactory. Given food, drink, the company of their fellows, sexual enjoyment, and plenty of noisy distractions from without, they are happy. They enjoy bodily, but hate mental, exercise. They cannot bear to be alone, or to think. Contemporary urban life, with its jazz bands, its negroid dancing, its movies, theaters, football matches, newspapers, and the like, is for them ideal. They can live out their lives without once being solitary, without once making a serious mental effort (for the work which most of these people do is mainly mechanical and requires little or no thought), without once being out of sight or sound of some ready-made distraction. The notion that one can derive pleasure from arduous intellectual occupations is to such people merely absurd. More leisure and more prosperity mean for them more dancing, more parties, more movies, more distractions in general. Most of the inhabitants of ancient Rome belonged to this type; so probably do most of the inhabitants of modern New York and London. And unless some system of eugenics is practiced in the interval, there is no reason to suppose that the inhabitants of the great cities in the year 3000 A.D. will be radically different. Machines are giving universal leisure, and universal leisure makes universal culture a possibility. But a large proportion of human beings are so constituted that they do not want to actualize that possibility.

This obstacle in the way of the beneficent tendency inaugurated by machinery is constitutional and cannot be removed except by some slow process of natural or artificial selection. But there is another obstacle, not inherent in human nature, but resulting from the particular circumstances of the case. The machines themselves supply the means of checking the progressive movement which they have made possible. The machines give leisure; but at the same time they give what is almost a guarantee that, except by a fortunately situated and well-endowed minority, that leisure shall be misused. Machinery creates prosperity and leisure by enabling men to manufacture enormous numbers of exactly similar objects in a short time. Mass production is an admirable thing when applied to material objects; but applied to the things of the spirit it is not so good. It might be good if the spiritual wares retailed by our mass-producers of the mind were of high quality. But they are not. As things are at present, mass-produced material objects are of much better quality than mass-produced ideas and mass-produced art. The material standard is higher. A boot factory whose finished products were as thoroughly shoddy as the products of the average idea- or art-factory would go bankrupt in a few months. Everybody objects to leaky ill-fitting boots; but only a small minority objects with anything like the same intensity to imbecile ideas and vulgarity in art. The really passionate haters of mass-produced stupidity do not go to the ordinary idea- and art-factories for their goods. They are strong-minded enough to create and consume an exclusive product of their own.

But between the born culture-haters and the born culture-lovers, between the half-wits and one-and-a-half-wits there exists a great mass of human beings whose rather indeterminate nature is ready to receive the imprint which circumstances may set upon it. Environmental forces can push them towards culture or away from it. In the Americanized world of the present and the immediate future those forces are set against culture. A little reflection will show that this is almost inevitable.

Proprietors of newspapers and theaters, directors of movies and radio companies are naturally as anxious to make money as anyone else. They find themselves living in a world in which a substantial percentage of the inhabitants are definitely haters of culture, while another substantial percentage are more or less neutral between the culture-haters and the culture-lovers and can be persuaded by judicious propaganda to move towards one side or the other. The born culture-haters are much more numerous than the born culture-lovers. Consequently, the mass-producers of ideas and art are anxious to bring the neutrals over to the culture-haters' side. The rotary press, the process block, the cinema, the radio, the phonograph are used not, as they might so easily be used, to propagate culture, but its opposite. All the resources of science are applied in order that imbecility may flourish and vulgarity cover the whole earth. That they are rapidly doing so must be obvious to anyone who glances at a popular picture paper, looks at a popular film, listens to popular music on the radio or phonograph.

The mere standardization of ideas made possible by modern machinery is in itself another obstacle to culture. One of the blessings of machinery, as I pointed out, is that it enables human beings to move about the surface of their earth with an unprecedented ease and rapidity. Travel has been, and still is, a liberal education. But newspapers, the radio, and elementary education are making all human beings more and more alike. One can anticipate a future in which men will be able to travel round the world without finding an idea or a custom different from those with which they are familiar at home. In 3000 A.D. one will doubtless be able to travel from Kansas City to Peking in a few hours. But if the civilization of these two places is the same, there will be no object in doing so.

There is another way in which machinery adversely affects culture. It removes man's incentive to amuse himself. In the past when people needed recreation they were compelled to a great extent to provide it for themselves. If you needed music you had to sing or play an instrument. If you wanted a pictorial

record of some person or scene you had to draw and paint. If you lived in a village or out-of-way town and wanted drama, you had to act yourself. To-day you need do none of these things. You turn on the gramophone or the radio when you need music; you click your kodak when you want a picture; you go to the village movies when you want drama. Recreation is provided ready-made by enormous joint-stock companies. The play-instinct, which found active expression in the past, is now passive. In the days before machinery men and women who wanted to amuse themselves were compelled, in their humble way, to be artists. Now they sit still and permit professionals to entertain them by the aid of machinery. It is difficult to believe that general artistic culture can flourish in this atmosphere of passivity.

III

Our final conclusion about machinery must be something like this: Machines have already greatly diminished human drudgery and increased prosperity and leisure, and there seems to be no reason to suppose that they will not continue their beneficent work. We may look forward to a future when the ordinary man and woman will be able to lead a life almost as free and leisured as that led in the past by the masters in a slave-owning society.

Giving leisure and wealth, machines make general culture possible. There can be no doubt that many people, who would otherwise have longed in vain, are now permitted, thanks to machinery, to satisfy their longing for culture. On the other hand, there are many more people for whom leisure and prosperity mean merely more opportunities for leading not the higher, but the lower life. Machinery makes culture possible but does not necessarily produce it among those who do not want to have it.

Finally, machinery makes it possible for the capitalists who control it to impose whatever ideas and art-forms they please on the mass of humanity. The higher the degree of standardiza-

tion in popular literature and art, the greater the profit for the manufacturer. The economic policy of the mass-producers of spiritual goods is to secure the greatest number of buyers for the fewest possible products. Their tendency, therefore, is to disseminate ideas and art of the lowest quality. For the lowest will be enjoyed by the huge culture-hating section of the population, while the neutrals between active culture-haters and active culture-lovers can be driven by propaganda and suggestion (made practicable by machinery on a hitherto unprecedented scale) to accept the lowest. There seems to be no reason why this state of affairs should change for the better in the immediate future. The tendency of what may be called the spiritual industries is to coalesce into great combinations. Iron, oil, and textiles are controlled by a few great trusts. The same is coming to be true of newspapers, the cinema, the radio, the phonograph. The great trust eliminates small individual ventures and aims at securing the maximum number of customers for the fewest products. Hence, its advantage is always to produce what is lowest.

The American political and social scene reveals the same conflicting tendencies towards good and bad. America started life with a clean slate. The Old World inherited from its past history a burden of monarchies, aristocracies, and established religions, whose utility, though once indisputable, has been for the last two hundred years steadily diminishing. Some sort of a case may be made for all these traditional institutions. But it would be true to say that, in the modern world, they are a source of more harm than good. Those who doubt it should read Ludwig's biography of Kaiser William the Second. It is a really terrifying book. Americans may feel profoundly thankful that their history has spared them the calamity of being ruled by such a man. The inappropriateness to modern conditions of the surviving medieval institutions has been everywhere realized. For the past half-century, and with increasing rapidity in the years since the War, the peoples of the Old World have been busily engaged in abolishing or modifying them. They have,

up to a point at any rate, imitated America. But that does not mean to say that American political institutions and American standards of social value are perfect. Monarchy and hereditary aristocracy may be a permanent source of corruption; but so is plutocracy. To pay respect to a king or a duke may be preposterous and unmanly; but is it much nobler to pay respect to a millionaire? Monarchical governments have been very corrupt; but can the governments of plutocratically controlled republics, such as France and America, produce a cleaner record? It may be doubted. The great merit of the American system consists solely in this—that careers are open to the talents. Under the medieval régime dignity belonged to a more or less closed hereditary caste, who wielded power and annexed its spoils. In America anyone with the luck or ability to make money can claim the respect due to a plutocrat and can take his share in the governing class's power and loot.

The medieval system, which still survives in a modified form in the Old World, was a hierarchy graded according to a very definite standard of social and spiritual values. The scale of social values culminated, as we have seen, in monarchy and hereditary aristocracy. At the head of the spiritual hierarchy was the ascetic saint and the man of learning. Theoretically, at any rate, it was by a divine, inborn right that the aristocrat headed the social hierarchy. A king was always a king, even when beggared and in exile; his royalty depended, not on material circumstances, but on his own inward essence. Spiritual eminence was equally independent of worldly circumstances. The essential virtue in the saint and the man of learning was disinterestedness. All this has been changed in America. The plutocrat is what he is by virtue solely of his material position in the world. If an accident should remove him from that position, he disappears into nonentity. Success is the test of social eminence. In spiritual matters disinterestedness is no longer the sign of superiority. Nothing is more remarkable than the recent American tendency to exalt the ordinary man, occupied with ordinary worldly affairs, at the expense of the exceptional

man who takes no interest in such affairs. I have seen it baldly stated by American spiritual leaders that "Business is religion." The indentification of business with service permits the worldling to identify himself with the Christian saints. This tendency to raise the ordinary, worldly man to the level of the extraordinary and disinterested one seems to me entirely deplorable. The next step will be to exalt him above the extraordinary man, who will be condemned and persecuted on principle because he is not ordinary—for not to be ordinary will be regarded as a crime. In this reversal of the old values I see a real danger, a menace to all desirable progress.

With regard to political democracy, its disadvantages are becoming daily more apparent in America as in all other countries which have adopted it as a system of government. Nobody can honestly suppose that a system which permits of such things as Mr. Thompson's election to the mayoralty of Chicago, with all its grotesque and outrageous accompaniments, is desirable or even in the long run practicable. The revolt against political democracy has already begun in Europe and is obviously destined to spread. There will be no return to autocracy, of course. Government will tend to be concentrated in the hands of intelligent and active oligarchies. The ideal state is one in which there is a material democracy controlled by an aristocracy of intellect—a state in which men and women are guaranteed a decent human existence and are given every opportunity to develop such talents as they possess, and where those with the greatest talent rule. The active and intelligent oligarchies of the ideal state do not yet exist. But the Fascist party in Italy, the Communist party in Russia, the Kuomintang in China are their still inadequate precursors. Owing to the strength of her democratic tradition, America will probably be one of the last countries to change her present form of government. But in the end the change will come. A country cannot go on indefinitely being afflicted by Thompson elections and anti-evolution laws.

But here the good democrat and humanitarian will interrupt

me. Thompson elections and anti-evolution laws, he will affirm, are destined to disappear automatically with the spread of education. And this launches us into the third division of our prophetic theme. What is to be the future of education in America and elsewhere?

IV

The eighteenth-century political theorists believed that men were congenitally equal and that education was all-powerful to make or mar them. According to Helvétius, any child could be turned into a Newton or a Shakespeare at will; it was just a question of giving him the right kind of training. Only Behaviorists agree with Helvétius now. The rest of us feel certain that children are not born with equal capacities, and that nature has as much to say in determining character and achievement as nurture—probably more than nurture, in fact. But this has not prevented every reformer for the last hundred years from clamoring for more and yet more education—"liberal" education at that—for all children, regardless of their abilities, their tastes, their natural bent; this has not prevented governments from giving effect, in considerable measure, to the reformers' demands. In all Western countries all the children receive the preparatory rudiments of a liberal, abstract education, while a certain percentage of them remain at school and college to acquire something more than the rudiments. It cannot be said that the results of our educational policy are particularly encouraging. The only striking effect of having taught everybody to read and write is that the human beings of lowest intelligence are now vocal instead of being dumb, as they were in the past. The great achievement of universal education is to have called into existence the contemporary popular press. I have spoken earlier in this essay of the way in which most men and women spend the leisure which machinery has given them. If education were effective, these people would lead—or at least desire to lead—that higher life whose beauty is the theme of all the homilies of all the teachers of the world. That they do not make

any attempt to lead the higher life is sufficient proof that our present system of education is faulty.

The education of the future—like its politics, its religion, its social organization—will be based on psychological realism. Men will take the trouble to find out the truth about their own souls and will then make social institutions to fit human nature. At present human nature is too often compelled to fit social institutions devised abstractly, in an intellectual void remote from all living reality. Contemporary educationists behave as though all human beings were by nature the same. The fundamental principle of future education will be that human beings are not the same, but belong to a variety of widely different types. To our fathers, and to a lesser degree to ourselves, it seems just and reasonable to give all children the same abstract, liberal education. This principle has been practically applied, and its disappointing results have made us begin to wonder if it is a sound one. To our children and grandchildren it will without doubt seem fantastic and absurd. They will give different kinds of education to different kinds of people. Children belonging to the various psychological types will receive the sort of training by which they can profit. The child with a concrete, practical mind will have a predominantly practical education; he will not waste his time, as he does at present, trying to learn abstractions which he cannot understand, trying to acquire a literary and pure-scientific culture which does not interest him.

It is for the purposes of education that human beings will first be officially divided up into different psychological types. But the process will not stop there. All political and social institutions will be reorganized so as to fit the psychological reality. One can imagine the evolution of a new social hierarchy, based on the facts of human nature and not, as was the old medieval hierarchy, on a system of more or less arbitrarily chosen artificial values. The new state will be democratic in so far as all men will be equal before the law and will be given every possible opportunity to achieve the career for which

their capacities have fitted them. It will be humanitarian in so far as all will be guaranteed a certain respectable minimum of material comfort and all will have the education which they are fitted to receive. But political democracy, as now practiced, will be unknown; our descendants will want a more efficient and rational form of government. The humanitarianism that professes to regard all human beings as equally endowed with moral worth and intellectual ability will be looked upon as an archaic absurdity. Countries which, like America, are traditionally wedded to the old-fashioned democratic and humanitarian ideas of the eighteenth century will probably resist the new tendency. But the force of circumstances will be too powerful for them. The growing incapacity of political democracy to deal intelligently with the ever-more-complicated problems of modern world-policy will force them to change their ideas about government. The wastefulness and inadequacy of the present educational system will compel them to change their ideas about education. The social chaos resulting from the breakdown of the ancient standards of value will make them desire to set up a hierarchy more natural and therefore stronger and more permanent than the old. The changes may be resisted; but they will be made. For it is fate that will impose them.

WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE

Newspaper man, novelist, essayist

"Emporia, Kansas" and William Allen White are almost synonymous. Mr. White has made famous the *Emporia Gazette* of Kansas, because he has been a fearless editorial writer, criticizing, with honesty of principles, anything of society or politics that is too conservative to be progressive or too radical to be sound.

Mr. White received honors during the war, having done important official business for the Red Cross and having served as delegate to the Russian Conference at Prinkipo.

". . . Literature, when it is taught as Mathematics, is a dull and awful subject. If I were teaching Literature, the first thing I would do would be to dispose of Keats and Shelley on a bootleg basis. I should tell the students that they must not read Keats and Shelley; that their writings contain many dangerous sentiments and some very suggestive passages not fit for their young minds. Then I should order Keats and Shelley put out of the Library except to the older students. I am quite sure that would bring Keats and Shelley into their own. I think I should do the same thing with Shakespeare except that I should add that there were many passages that were unfit for young readers and I should frown upon the obvious indecencies of Shakespeare. In that event I should forbid my classes to read Shakespeare at all—and how they would swallow him!

"Now about my own experiences. Through an accident in my schooling, in the high school, I had to take Hill's rhetoric two successive years. Then I found Hill's rhetoric required as a Freshman study in the university. I knew it by heart. It helped me wonderfully. Without it I should not have found writing as easy as it came to me. But after all, it doesn't come so very easily. When I submit anything to a magazine or put it into a book, I write it over and over again, revising it carefully. My novel, *A Certain Rich Man*, was copied entirely, 150,000 words, three times, and each copy was revised twice. It is often possible to strike off a paragraph spontaneously and well; but anything worth saying is worth saying in the clearest, most lucid terms. Writing is exactly like any other skilled trade; it requires an apprenticeship."

—W. A. White.

CHEER UP, AMERICA![1]

I

For four months, half a hundred workmen at the corners of Thirty-second and Thirty-third Streets and Park Avenue in New York City have been tearing down an old temple—a temple of hospitality, the old Park Avenue Hotel. The old temple was filled with sentiment and surrounded by traditions, in so far as two or three American generations can hallow a temple. In January of 1927, after four months' work, the temple had been reduced to a sort of ground plan of its ruins. It looked like Pompeii. In the midst of the ruins two great machines, somehow reminding one of sentient beings, sank their great tusks into the earth, biting out huge steel basketloads of brick and dust, boards and stone, scrap iron and mortar. The steel beasts, swishing their plumy steam tails into the cool winter air, hummed their eternal work song. The workmen, scurrying about the débris, were busy with a dozen kinds of tasks. Each small group was doing its work with three or four foremen over the lot, directing the force. On a cold day the workmen were overcoated, gloved, warmly clad. A dozen, and sometimes a score of idlers, leaned against the railings that strung about the vacant lot, watching the workers. The idlers were clad about as the workers were, and the workers were clad about as the men hurrying along to the Avenue on business errands. A shabbier, dustier, more worn brown appeared in the workers' clothes, and a few more wrinkles than appeared on the clothes of the wayfarers; but that dusty brown made the chief difference between those who were working with their hands and those who idled or hurried into the offices that rose ten, fifteen,

[1] Reprinted by permission of the author from *Harper's Magazine*, March 1927, pp. 405–411.

twenty stories in the buildings nearby. The foremen were not distinguished from the workers in either clothing or in the manner of their occupation. They all worked; no man idled. Few gave orders. The orders were reasonably polite.

Four years ago I saw wreckers working around a temple in Egypt near Luxor. They were digging it out. Thirty or forty boys between the ages of eight and twenty, naked save for a loincloth, grubbing up the débris and talus of another age, uncovering some ancient temple with a tradition hallowed in Egypt about as the Park Avenue Hotel was hallowed in Manhattan. The foreman, turbanned and draped in long dark skirts, stood over the youths, yelling at them, cursing them, urging them to their task. They, watching the tail of his eye with snakelike cunning, did as little clawing in the earth as possible, filled as few leaky baskets as possible, under which their comrades groaned as they carried them out of the excavation. Occasionally, and when a white man came along, to emphasize the abysmal difference yawning between the foreman and the workers, the turbanned man cracked his whip and let the lash fall upon the naked back of some boy who jumped and winced and began to claw eagerly in the earth. Another foreman, or superintendent, much more gorgeously turbanned, much more splendidly robed, sat aloof, as far from the slave driver as the slave driver was from his prey. And occasionally, strolling into the work, came another man, an Egyptian apparently, of the scholarly cast, whose eyes scorned the superintendent and could not even see the foreman and had no social consciousness whatever of the naked creatures groveling in the dust—ages in time behind him and unspeakably beneath. By way of diversion some American tourists threw a handful of copper coins at the grubbing boys. They started to pounce upon the coins like hungry pups, when the foreman's lash cracked, driving them away, and he stooped down and gathered up the loot.

Somewhere in the contrast between those pictures lies all that is worth while in America. Before going into the obvious

contrasts between the pictures, let us find the common points in each. Probably, at least typically, there was profit for the employer in both jobs. Upon his profit both bosses lorded it over those who walked and worked in the economic rank just beneath the bosses. Probably there were fewer unsatisfied wants among the barebacked boys of Thebes in their breechcloths than would be found among the men at Thirty-third Street and Park Avenue. The workmen on each job most likely slept well, ate well according to the tradition and environment of the times and place, fought easily, lived and loved according to the distinction of each man's temperament, whether he came from an east side tenement or from a mud hovel along the Nile. The boys in Thebes did not seem to mind the lash. The men on Park Avenue did not seem to be oppressed by the compulsion which made them work and allowed the idlers to gaze at them. Very likely and typically, there may have been in each job, the one in Thebes, the one in Park Avenue, considerable favoritism, a little graft, some downright dishonesty, if each transaction were all unraveled and put under the magnifying glass of a cantankerous sociologist. And yet, despite these similarities which might be spun out still further, the two pictures revealed two civilizations, each civilization founded upon a deeply different social philosophy. In Egypt are the beginnings of human progress; from America, looking back, we can measure man's advance. He has not come to the end of the trail, of course. But he seems to have been moving, and in the various civilizations still functioning on the globe, we may trace the windings of man's trail of progress.

II

Now it is fair to ask what is the chief gain which man has made on his long journey. It is reasonable to presume that the journey has been an upward journey. What has man found in these later, and probably higher, levels which he did not have when he left the woods and settled in the open valley with his herd, his plow, and his boat upon the stream and inland sea?

What, in this Mediterranean civilization, of which America is the direct descendant, has man found that is new and worth while? Why, indeed, is it better for man, taking him as merely a two-legged, burden-bearing animal, to live in America than to live on the banks of the Nile?

Man has marked his progress not so much by the material aspects of his civilization as he has marked it by his philosophy of life, considering the material things about him as the outward and visible sign of his inner and spiritual attitude toward life. Now man's spiritual attitude which marks his progress is chiefly toward his fellows, but somewhat toward the things outside himself which he fancies make for his security and happiness. The attitude which marks and makes the difference between the boys under the lash of Thebes and the men under orders at Thirty-third Street and Park Avenue, New York City, United States of America, is the attitude of good will manifest in mutual consideration. This mutual consideration which dominates our Western civilization—the civilization of Europe and America, with all its imperfections too obvious to enumerate—has enlarged one quality in man which makes the Western man different from his fellows on the planet. The Western man has self-respect. That is "the pearl of great price." That is the thing for which man in the West ideally would lose his life that he might save it. Because of the fact that in America men may easily be self-respecting, the millions have come flocking to the United States from all over the globe. Self-respect is bought with many things, but the common coin with which men to-day seek to buy it is gold, wealth, the thing epitomized in the word capital. To be free from the lash for one day, for one year, for one life is the chief end of man. Not because of the ease it brings, but because of the freedom it brings. Freedom is another name for self-respect. Democracy is institutionalized self-respect—nothing more, and, ideally, little less. It is odd to watch man in the ages between Thebes and New York City, nosing about for five thousand years against the hard wall of time and circumstance, burrowing for a quick pas-

sage through to self-respect. He tried here, a military empire under Rome; there, a feudal system; yonder, a hierarchy; beyond, a limited monarchy; each attempt coming a little nearer to the ideal in his heart. It is not hard to find fault with the tunnel man has made, to show that he has doubled back many times, to see where he has futilely followed blind leads. It is absurdly easy to look into man's heart to-day in the quest for democracy and find there evidences of envy, of greed, of blindness, of malice, of all the lusts of the flesh. The mean spirit that ever chains man to his clay prison is always flaunting itself. So, of course, democracy, and particularly American democracy, is crass, is crammed with injustices, strident with disharmony, marred with ugliness, cursed with selfishness. Bernard Shaw in *Pygmalion* makes his hero ask a lady, "if she fancied it would be agreeable if the hero came out frankly with all the things in his mind." The lady twitters that it might be cynical, and the hero shrieks, "It would not be decent." Every wise man knows this and yet he understands that beneath the indecencies in the mind of humanity are humanity's deep aspirations, its struggling nobility, its unrealized ideals.

So it is with democracy. Who can doubt that our American democracy has built into stone and steel, brick and wood, even into the institutions of commerce and of government, of religion and social usage, a million aspects of our animal indecencies? Always man has made his obscene gods, but he has always fashioned his glorious vision; always he has tempered his ideal justice with palpable inequity. To point out in American civilization its banality; to stress our commercial greed, our ravening imperialism on the sea whereon the flag follows the bargain; to fall down in despair before boodlers and grafters in politics; to grow gloomy in the face of social climbers; to surrender all hope for America because of the tabloid newspapers, jazz in the radio, and the demagogue in public life—in short, to stress the indecencies obvious in the scum of our consciousness, is to see life as a child sees it and to miss its meaning. The same child, looking at "the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that

was Rome" would forget also the vast cruelties of those civilizations which outbalanced for the common man the superficial beauties that survive those civilizations. Progress in a civilization must be measured by its effect upon man in the average if we are to accept what seems to be man's aim in his struggle with his environment since the dawn of history. In some other age another man may aspire to something better than self-respect. He may seek some attitude finer than his own soul's freedom. But since man first began making his record in the world, it seems fairly clear that he has been striving for just one thing—the right to be his own and not another's.

It is pathetic to observe the various objects which man has brought in his hand with which to pay the gods of life in his quest for self-respect. He walked through countless unrecorded ages bringing two things—the soldier's sword and the priest's mitre. Through war and religion he sought to establish himself over his fellows and so maintain his soul's dignity. Then he came with the ballot in its various forms which produce self-government. Now he comes bringing capital. Each price—war, religion, democracy, capitalism—has represented a change in man's philosophic expression of the same ideal, his yearning for the thing called equality of opportunity. Of course, envy of his fellows has motivated much of man's activity in seeking that equality of opportunity which makes for self-respect. But envy does not debase all of his conduct. If envy debased everything in the struggle for self-respect there would be no heroes. Man would be without nobility—a brother of the beasts. Envy permeates the struggle for democracy but it does not explain it.

III

The pathetic restlessness with which man tries first one thing and then another in bargaining for the democratic ideal—the sword, the mitre, the ballot, the dollar—is most patent to-day in America. There are signs that we are losing faith in the ballot and relying more and more on the dollar. Government as an agency for human welfare received a tremendous shock when

the governments of the world failed to bring peace out of War. In America for twenty-five years before the War the people had been striving to make government work as a democratic agency. They had faith in the ballot, they believed in political power as an agency for justice, and seemed to feel that if they could put that power, through the ballot, into the hands of the common man, he would use it intelligently, unselfishly, nobly. So in America all kinds of political devices for strengthening the power of the masses: the direct election of United States senators, the primary, the initiative and referendum, the secret ballot, the headless ballot, anti-corruption laws—came into American political life.

Still the millennium receded as we approached it. The American quest for justice which would bring self-respect to the individual by equalizing the political opportunities of all individuals, proved to be a vain quest. We found some justice, we equalized some opportunities, we checked some iniquities. Probably we have gained a little in our contest with the forces of greed within us which ever seek, and ever have sought since the days of Cain and Abel, to overcome the nobler passions of men in establishment of good will—good will which promotes social peace, which brings justice and self-respect into the hearts of men. The particular form in which the devil in our hearts has become manifest during the last two or three hundred years, the dragon against which the St. George of democracy has been struggling, has been capital. A wiseacre of Broadway declares, "There are many things in this life that are better than money, but it takes money to get them."

In humanity's quest for self-respect man has repeated in his use of capital as a bargaining agent with the gods somewhat the struggle he made with each of the ancient devices by which he has sought to attain his ideal. It is something more than a quest, something less than a bargain, this ceaseless endeavor to find "the pearl of great price." And when man takes up a new device—the sword, the mitre, the ballot, or the dollar—with which to buy his way into Utopia, he always finds that

the thing which he believes will save him actually menaces him. The capital of the present age, which has been produced by "many inventions," has, of course, brought the average man far into the realm of social dignity; but as surely as we have advanced far, behind the ægis of capital, so we are now threatened by it, and in America this is particularly true.

America is the paradise of capital. For three hundred years, during the rise of capitalism in the world, America has been the spot to which men from all over the world have been attracted by the love of money. They have called it the love of freedom, but the freedom for the most part has been bought with capital. The continent is rich, the climate salubrious, life abundant. Wealth has piled high and no man or class has been able to hold it all. Somehow, the lavish hand of nature in a virgin continent, rich in alluvial soil and minerals, blessed with a temperate climate, has helped to pile up and yet distribute wealth. Somehow, the very abundance of wealth has made it easy for the average man to acquire a share. So here from all over the earth the poor and oppressed have come and found the self-respect which they have been denied in other places. Government has taken wealth from the few and given its blessings to the many in the form of education, policing, regulatory measures affecting transportation, communication, and human welfare. The government has bought health for the masses out of taxes; the government has engaged in the care of the poor, of the defective, and has organized opportunity in a score of ways undreamed of in other times and places. But with all this public activity, with all the political distribution of wealth, with all our legislation, with all our constitutional prohibition of hereditary caste, vast inequities still remain. Worse than the inequities of life are its uglinesses, its disharmonies, and its terrible standardization. Politics, that benevolent goddess who mothers the weak and the oppressed with sheltering institutions, who distributes her largesse in schools, in health, with a certain show of justice in her courts, has another mood and face. She is a corrupt and designing hussy.

American politics are probably no worse than the politics of any other land; but while we are praising what our government has done we should not deny that government also is the shield for special privilege, that government does make it possible for the rich to enjoy privileges in our courts which are denied to the poor, that government does at times act with stupidity, and at times with cupidity. The Declaration of Independence, which is the charter of our liberties, the covenant of our self-respect in America, the source of our idealism, has only been partially realized under our Constitution. Our Constitution, with all its wisdom, still has far to go to institutionalize all the ideals of the Declaration. There remain vast areas untouched in that noble document of 1776; and it is folly to deny that in man's quest for self-respect here in America he is faced continually by the dangers of plutocracy, the dangers of a despotism as cruel and as unjust as any of the despotisms out of which he has struggled in ages past.

But the joyous thing about it is that in America the fight is a fair fight. If we are brave enough and wise enough and honest enough to make the fight for self-respect, even against the centripetal forces of capitalism, we can win out of the very capitalism itself all the liberties which our hearts desire. Granted all that the finical say about and against America. Granted that our politics are corrupt. Granted that much of our standardization is ugly; that in democratizing the arts we have somewhat debased the arts. Granted that in distributing the products of commerce and industry we have quickly elevated millions into living standards which they do not appreciate and cannot evaluate wisely. Granted that democracy is crass, motivated somewhat by envy. Granted all its enemies say of it—still America, more than any other section of the earth, does guarantee to each human being according to his capacity for industry, courage, and intelligence, a right to look squarely into the face of his peers, dream his own dreams, follow his own visions, live his own life, with such abundance, with such beauty, and with such joy as his own heart may contain.

It is that making of potential self-respect which has drawn the millions to our shores all these three hundred years, the age which has seen the rise of capitalism in the world. Here man may find in his battle against the forces which would crush him into servility a fine field and a fair fight—a fair fight despite all the tremendous prestige and power of aggrandized wealth. For in America aggrandized wealth is not fool proof. It is not established by a legal hereditary caste. Waste may take away from the fool the thing he cherishes and pass his money to the wise. That folly and extravagance cannot do in a legalized aristocracy. The titled fool without his money elsewhere in the world still holds his prestige; the fool without his money in America is just "a fool i' the forest."

IV

That which America has done with humanity is to make the dynamic man—the man eager for change. Throw the whole kit of modern inventions, from steam engine to the radio, into the African jungle or into the midst of Asia, or even into the European peasantry, and these inventions would bring no hope, would change no social or economic status, would bring no relations of man based upon the faith of man in his fellows. Somewhere in a laboratory, working with his tubes and fires, a scientist in an apron is weighing, measuring, trying, changing, poking his fingers into a place along the dead wall that impedes our further progress, and maybe tomorrow, maybe next month, or next year, or the next decade or the next century, he will find the thing that will upset and revolutionize the world. Where will he go with it? It will affect mankind first and surest and in the broadest way in America, because America accepts change. In the golden quest of the ages, the quest for self-respect, we have built actually a new kind of man in America.

There is something in the theory of the Christian theologians that man must be born again. In America he is regenerated. On the North American continent and among the English-speaking colonies, the white man looks at life squarely and

without a servile eye. He is no white-winged cherub, no pink angel. By no means has his altruism overcome his eye for the main chance. With all his keen anxiety for change and his profound belief that change is always for the better, with all his institutions taxing the few for the benefit of the many, in education and health, protection and regulation, the American's altruism does not soften him into impotency. He still believes that all things come to him who hustles while he waits, and grabs quickly. But while he grabs he gives. He is a dollar-chaser, certainly; but not for the dollar but for the game rather. He has no sou grip. Pennies and dollars slip through his hands after he has them. He gambles with his gains like a drunken sailor. More than most of his brothers, the American knows that he is his brother's keeper. The thing which has left him in his rebirth is cruelty. He is not callous of suffering and pain; certainly he is not plagued with the sadist's love to hurt. He hits hard, but takes no comfort in revenge. He went into the World War partly in fear, partly prodded by propaganda which worked him into a fine frenzy of altruistic folly. But while he fought like a devil he came out of it with a gay, childish vanity in the fact that he had asked no ransom, that he had exacted no stipend for revenge, or remuneration, and had added nothing to the suffering of mankind. He does not yet realize the implications that follow the collection of what he regards his honest debts; when he does he may make a fine gesture and throw his notes into the sea. And at the end of the episode which began in Serajevo in 1914, the American will be the only man connected with the sad occurrence who has not reaped, consciously and in the sweet solace of revenge, any intentional reward from the War. This is not because he is better or worse than other men. It is because the American is reborn, regenerated, renewed in self-respect. Another millennium may improve him, may refine him, may quicken his sensibilities and broaden his intellectual and spiritual horizon. Heaven hasten the day. But until that day comes, let us Americans not be fooled and discouraged by those one-eyed critics who see only our faults.

If they say "America has no native art" let them remember that she patronizes the art of the world generously and, upon the whole, intelligently. If her statesmen are cheap, short-sighted, and dull, her inventors are completing the work of civilization where politics has dropped it. If we have produced no musicians except those who jangle jazz, let it not be forgotten that we have orchestras, conducted, if you will, by Europeans, but still patronized by the masses; more good orchestras than any other land. The great composers of other times and other lands find to-day their largest audiences in America. Our literature may be provincial, but we are cosmopolitan in our taste for literature. Our religion may be dominated to a larger extent than the religions of other lands by a tom-tom evangelism and bull-roaring emotionalism. But where else will the weak find public succor so near him? In what other hundred millions on earth is health being conserved by public institutions; and where else does the cry of distress, from whatever corner of the world it comes, find such quick and wide response? That is the test of our religion, not our yapping, jumping, Hell-spreading evangelists.

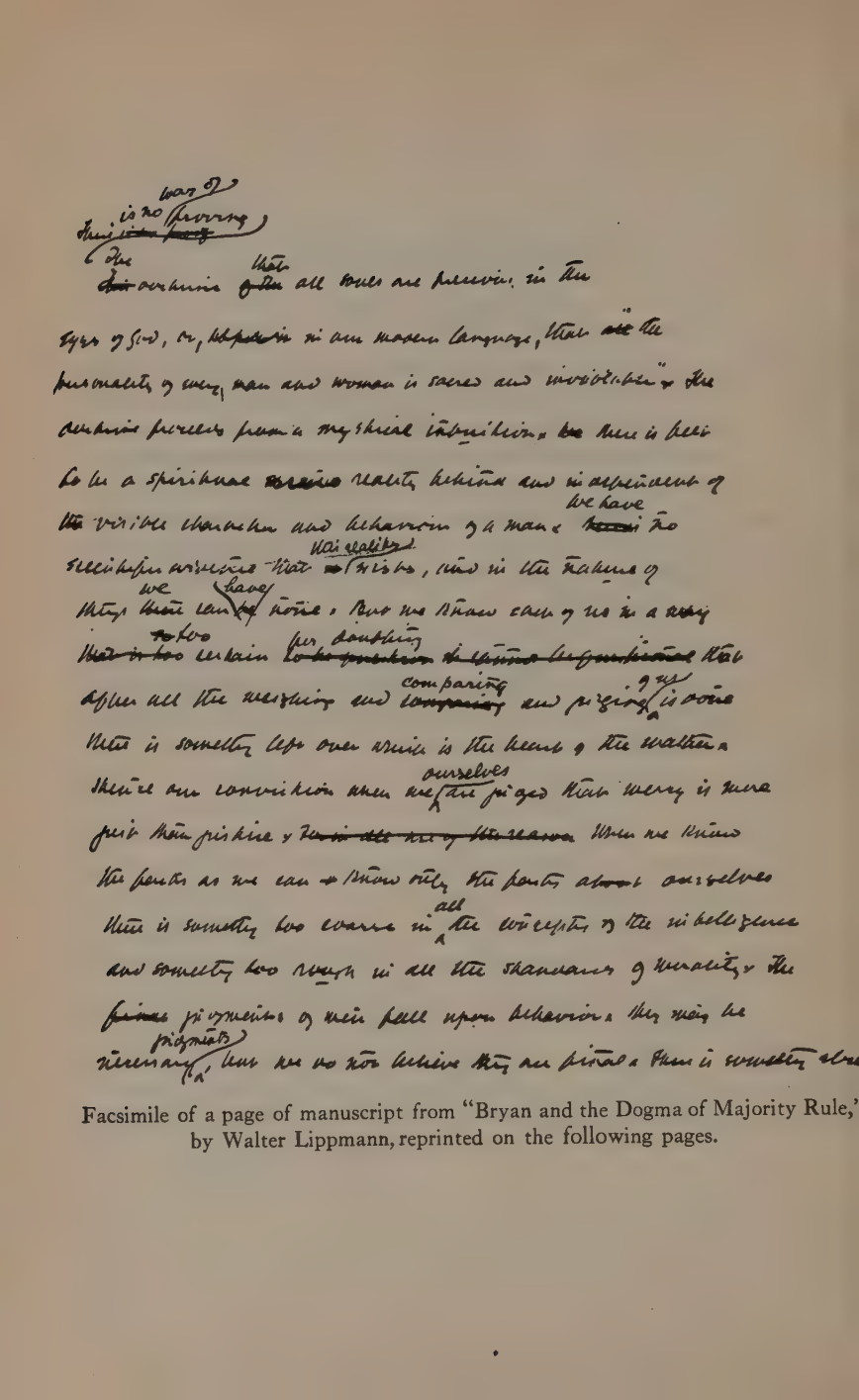
It is easy to criticize America, and on the whole it is wise to do so. The gadfly's proboscis injects the serum of progress into our blood with its discontent; but let us also remember, as we listen to our critics, that humanity is wiser than they, and that if America had not some real thing to offer, if America had not "the pearl of great price," America would not be the magnet which is turning to our shores the dreams of the millions from all over the world. Here they come, these eager millions, willing to lay down their lives, their traditions; eager even to give over that dearest of all inheritances—their own nationalities, that they may find joy and salvation in the rebirth which is America. The millions who seek to become Americans are indeed willing to give their lives that they may save them. That great fact is our challenge to the world.

WALTER LIPPMANN

Newspaper man, critic

After several years of associate editorship on *The New Republic*, Mr. Lippmann became active in war work, first as an assistant to the Secretary of War, in 1917, and later as secretary of the organization directed by Colonel House to prepare data for the Peace Conference. He was also a captain in the U. S. A. Military Intelligence in the A. E. F. and an American Commissioner to Negotiate Peace. He therefore speaks with authority, as well as with literary ability, on national and political questions.

In lieu of a letter, Mr. Lippmann has contributed a page of manuscript from the third draft of his article reproduced here, "Bryan and the Dogma of the Majority Rule." After that, more revisions were made before it was published in the final form which this text reprints.



Facsimile of a page of manuscript from "Bryan and the Dogma of Majority Rule," by Walter Lippmann, reprinted on the following pages.

BRYAN AND THE DOGMA OF MAJORITY RULE[1]

I

During the Dayton trial there was much discussion about what happened to Mr. Bryan. How had a progressive democrat become so illiberal? How did it happen that the leader of the hosts of progress in 1896 was the leader of the hosts of darkness in 1925?

It was said that he had grown old. It was said that he was running for President. It was said that he had the ambition to lead an uprising of fundamentalists and prohibitionists. It was said that he was a beaten orator who had found his last applauding audience in the backwoods. And it was said that he had undergone a passionate religious conversion.

No matter whether the comment was charitable or malicious, it was always an explanation. There was always the assumption that Mr. Bryan had changed and, that in changing, he had departed from the cardinal tenets of his political faith. Mr. Bryan vehemently denied this, and on reflection, I am now inclined to think he was right. We were too hasty. Mr. Bryan's career was more logical and of a piece than it looked. There was no such contradiction, as most of us assumed, in the spectacle of the Great Commoner fighting for the legal suppression of scientific teaching.

He argued that a majority of the voters in Tennessee had the right to decide what should be taught in their schools. He had always argued that a majority had the right to decide. He had insisted on their right to decide on war and peace, on their right to regulate morals, on their right to make and unmake laws and lawmakers and executives and judges. He had fought

[1] From *Men of Destiny*, pp. 45–60. Copyright 1927 by The Macmillan Company.

to extend the suffrage so that the largest possible majority might help to decide; he had fought for the direct election of senators, for the initiative and referendum and direct primary, and for every other device which would permit the people to rule. He had always insisted that the people should rule. And he had never qualified this faith by saying what they should rule and how. It was no great transformation of thought, and certainly it was not for him an abandonment of principle to say that, if a majority in Tennessee was fundamentalist, then the public schools in Tennessee should be conducted on fundamentalist principles.

To question this right of the majority would have seemed to him as heretical as to question the fundamentalist creed. Mr. Bryan was as true to his political as he was to his religious faith. He had always believed in the sanctity of the text of the Bible. He had always believed that a majority of the people should rule. Here in Tennessee was a majority which believed in the sanctity of the text. To lead this majority was the logical climax of his career, and he died fighting for a cause in which the two great dogmas of his life were both at stake.

Given his two premises, I do not see how it is possible to escape his conclusions. If every word of the first chapter of Genesis is directly inspired by an omniscient and omnipotent God, then there is no honest way of accepting what scientists teach about the origin of man. And if the doctrine of majority rule is based on the eternal and inherent rights of man, then it is the only true basis of government, and there can be no fair objections to the moral basis of a law made by a fundamentalist majority in Tennessee. It is no answer to Mr. Bryan to say that the law is absurd, obscurantist, and reactionary. It follows from his premises, and it can be attacked radically only by attacking his premises.

This first premise: that the text of the Bible was written, as John Donne put it, by the Secretaries of the Holy Ghost, I shall not attempt to discuss here. There exists a vast literature of criticism. I am interested in his second premise: that the ma-

jority is of right sovereign in all things. And here the position is quite different. There is a literature of dissent and of satire and denunciation. But there exists no carefully worked-out higher criticism of a dogma which, in theory at least, constitutes the fundamental principle of nearly every government in the western world. On the contrary, the main effort of political thinkers during the last few generations has been devoted to vindicating the rights of masses of men against the vested rights of clerics and kings and nobles and men of property. There has been a running counter attack from those who distrusted the people, or had some interest in opposing their enfranchisement, but I do not know of any serious attempt to reach a clear understanding of where and when the majority principle applies.

Mr. Bryan applied it absolutely at Dayton, and thereby did a service to democratic thinking. For he reduced to absurdity a dogma which had been held carelessly but almost universally, and thus demonstrated that it was time to reconsider the premises of the democratic faith. Those who believed in democracy have always assumed that the majority should rule. They have assumed that, even if the majority is not wise, it is on the road to wisdom, and that with sufficient education the people would learn how to rule. But in Tennessee the people used their power to prevent their own children from learning, not merely the doctrine of evolution, but the spirit and method by which learning is possible. They had used their right to rule in order to weaken the agency which they had set up in order that they might learn how to rule. They had founded popular government on the faith in popular education, and then they had used the prerogatives of democracy to destroy the hopes of democracy.

After this demonstration in Tennessee it was no longer possible to doubt that the dogma of majority rule contains within it some sort of deep and destructive confusion.

II

In exploring this dogma it will be best to begin at the very beginning with the primitive intuition from which the whole

democratic view of life is derived. It is a feeling of ultimate equality and fellowship with all other creatures.

There is no worldly sense in this feeling, for it is reasoned from the heart: "There you are, sir, and there is your neighbor. You are better born than he, you are richer, you are stronger, you are handsomer, nay, you are better, wiser, kinder, more likable; you have given more to your fellowmen and taken less than he. By any and every test of intelligence, of virtue, of usefulness, you are demonstrably a better man than he, and yet—absurd as it sounds—these differences do not matter, for the last part of him is untouchable and incomparable and unique and universal." Either you feel this or you do not; when you do not feel it the superiorities that the world acknowledges seem like mountainous waves at sea; when you do feel it they are slight and impermanent ripples upon a vast ocean. Men were possessed by this feeling long before they had imagined the possibility of democratic government. They spoke of it in many ways, but the essential quality of feeling is the same from Buddha to St. Francis to Whitman.

There is no way of proving the doctrine that all souls are precious in the eyes of God, or, as Dean Inge recently put it, that "the personality of every man and woman is sacred and inviolable." The doctrine proceeds from a mystical intuition. There is felt to be a spiritual reality behind and independent of the visible character and behavior of a man. We have no scientific evidence that this reality exists, and in the nature of things we have none. But we know each of us, in a way too certain for doubting that, after all the weighing and comparing and judging of us is done, there is something left over which is the heart of the matter. Hence our conviction when we ourselves are judged that mercy is more just than justice. When we know the facts as we can know only the facts about ourselves, there is something too coarse in all the concepts of the intelligence and something too rough in all the standards of morality. The judgments of men fall upon behavior. They may be necessary judgments, but we do not believe they are final. There is some-

thing else, which is inadmissible, perhaps, as evidence in this world, which would weigh mightily before divine justice.

Each of us knows that of himself, and some attribute the same reserved value to others. Some natures with a genius for sympathy extend it to everyone they know and can imagine; others can barely project it to their wives and children. But even though few really have this sympathy with all men, there is enough of it abroad, reinforced perhaps with each man's dread of his fate in the unknown, to establish the doctrine rather generally. So we execute the murderer, but out of respect for an inviolable part of him we allow him the consolation of a priest and we bury him respectfully when he is dead. For we believe that, however terrible was his conduct, there is in him, nevertheless, though no human mind can detect it, a final quality which makes him part of our own destiny in the universe.

I can think of no inherent reason why men should entertain this mystical respect for other men. But it is easy to show how much that we find best in the world would be lost if the sense of equality and fellowship were lost. If we judged and were judged by our visible behavior alone, the inner defenses of civility and friendship and enduring love would be reached. Outward conduct is not good enough to endure a cold and steady analysis. Only an animal affection become habitual and reflected in mystical respect can blind people sufficiently to our faults. They would not like us enough to pardon us if all they had to go on was a strict behaviorist account of our conduct. They must reach deeper, blindly and confidently, to something which they know is likable although they do not know why. Otherwise the inequalities of men would be intolerable. The strong, the clever, the beautiful, the competent, and the good would make life miserable for their neighbors. They would be unbearable with their superiorities, and they would find unbearable the sense of inferiority they implanted in others. There would be no term upon the arrogance of the successful and the envy of the defeated. For without the mystic sense of equality the obvious inequalities would seem unalterable.

These temporal differences are seen in perspective by the doctrine that in the light of eternity there are no differences at all.

III

It is not possible for most of us, however, to consider anything very clearly or steadily in the light of eternity. The doctrine of ultimate human equality cannot be tested in human experience; it rests on a faith which transcends experience. That is why those who understood the doctrine have always been ascetic; they ignored or renounced worldly goods and worldly standards. These things belonged to Cæsar. The mystical democrat did not say that they should not belong to Cæsar; he said that they would be of no use to Cæsar ultimately, and that, therefore, they were not to be taken seriously now.

But in the reception of this subtle argument the essential reservation was soon obscured. The mystics were preaching equality only to those men who had renounced their carnal appetites; they were welcomed as preachers of equality in this world. Thus the doctrine that I am as good as you are in eternity because all the standards of goodness are finite and temporary, was converted into the doctrine that I am as good as you are in this world by the world's standards. The mystics had attained a sense of equality by transcending and renouncing all the standards by which we measure inequality. The populace retained its appetites and its standards and then sought to deny the inequalities which they produced and revealed.

The mystical democrat had said, "Gold and precious stones are of no account"; the literal democrat understood him to say that everybody ought to have gold and precious stones. The mystical democrat had said "Beauty is only skin deep"; and the literal democrat preened himself and said, "I always suspected I was as handsome as you." Reason, intelligence, learning, wisdom, dealt for the mystic only with passing events in a temporal world and could help men little to fathom the ultimate meaning of creation; to the literal democrat this in-

capacity of reason was evidence that one man's notion was intrinsically as good as another's.

Thus the primitive intuition of democracy became the animus of a philosophy which denied that there could be an order of values among men. Any opinion, any taste, any action was intrinsically as good as any other. Each stands on its own bottom and guarantees itself. If I feel strongly about it, it is right; there is no other test. It is right not only as against your opinion, but against my own opinion, about which I no longer feel so strongly. There is no arbitrament by which the relative value of opinions is determined. They are all free, they are all equal, all have the same rights and powers.

Since no value can be placed upon an opinion, there is no way in this philosophy of deciding between opinions except to count them. Thus the mystical sense of equality was translated to mean in practice that two minds are better than one mind and two souls better than one soul. Your true mystic would be horrified at the notion that you can add up souls and that the greater number is superior to the lesser. To him souls are imponderable and incommensurable; that is the only sense in which they are truly equal. And yet in the name of that sense of equality which he attains by denying that the worth of a soul can be measured, the worldly democrats have made the mere counting of souls the final arbiter of all worth. It is a curious misunderstanding; Mr. Bryan brought it into high relief during the Tennessee case. The spiritual doctrine that all men will stand at last equal before the throne of God meant to him that all men are equally good biologists before the ballot box of Tennessee. That kind of democracy is quite evidently a gross materialization of an idea that in essence cannot be materialized. It is a confusing interchange of two worlds that are not interchangeable.

IV

Although the principle of majority rule derives a certain sanctity from the mystical sense of equality, it is really quite

unrelated to it. There is nothing in the teachings of Jesus or St. Francis which justifies us in thinking that the opinions of fifty-one per cent of a group are better than the opinions of forty-nine per cent. The mystical doctrine of equality ignores the standards of the world and recognizes each soul as unique; the principle of majority rule is a device for establishing standards of action in this world by the crude and obvious device of adding up voters. Yet owing to a confusion between the two, the mystical doctrine has been brutalized and made absurd, and the principle of majority rule has acquired an unction that protects it from criticism. A mere political expedient, worth using only when it is necessary or demonstrably useful to the conduct of affairs, has been hallowed by an altogether adventitious sanctity due to an association of ideas with a religious hope of salvation.

Once we succeed in disentangling this confusion of ideas, it becomes apparent that the principle of majority rule is wholly alien to what the humane mystic feels. The rule of the majority is the rule of force. For while nobody can seriously maintain that the greatest number must have the greatest wisdom or the greatest virtue, there is no denying that under modern social conditions they are likely to have the most power. I say likely to have, for we are reminded by the recent history of Russia and of Italy that organized and armed minorities can under certain circumstances disfranchise the majority. Nevertheless, it is a good working premise that in the long run the greater force resides in the greater number, and what we can call a democratic society might be defined for certain purposes as one in which the majority is always prepared to put down a revolutionary minority.

The apologists of democracy have done their best to dissemble the true nature of majority rule. They have argued that by some mysterious process the opinion to which a majority subscribes is true and righteous. They have even attempted to endow the sovereign majority with the inspiration of an infallible church and of kings by the grace of God. It was a natural mis-

take. Although they saw clearly enough that the utterances of the church were the decisions of the ruling clergy, and that the divine guidance of the king was exercised by his courtiers, they were not prepared to admit that the new sovereign was a purely temporal ruler. They felt certain they must ascribe to the majority of the voters the same supernatural excellence which had always adhered to the traditional rulers. Throughout the nineteenth century, therefore, the people were flattered and mystified by hearing that deep within a fixed percentage of them there lay the same divine inspiration and the same gifts of revelation which men had attributed previously to the established authorities.

And then just as in the past men had invented a mythical ancestry for their king, tracing his line back to David or Æneas or Zeus himself, so the minnesingers of democracy have invented their own account of the rise of popular government. The classic legend is to be found in the theory of the Social Contract, and few naïve democrats are without traces of belief in this legend. They imagine that somehow "the people" got together and established nations and governments and institutions. Yet the historic record plainly shows that the progress of democracy has consisted in an increasing participation of an increasing number of people in the management of institutions they neither created nor willed. And the record shows, too, that new numbers were allowed to participate when they were powerful enough to force their way in; they were enfranchised not because "society" sought the benefits of their wisdom, and not because "society" wished them to have power; they were enfranchised because they had power, and giving them the vote was the least disturbing way of letting them exercise their power. For the principle of majority rule is the mildest form in which the force of numbers can be exercised. It is a pacific substitute for civil war in which the opposing armies are counted and the victory is awarded to the larger before any blood is shed.

Except in the sacred tests of democracy and in the incanta-

tions of the orators, we hardly take the trouble to pretend that the rule of the majority is not at bottom a rule of force. What other virtue can there be in fifty-one per cent except the brute fact that fifty-one is more than forty-nine? The rule of fifty-one per cent is a convenience, it is for certain matters a satisfactory political device, it is for others the lesser of two evils, and for still others it is acceptable because we do not know any less troublesome method of obtaining a political decision. But it may easily become an absurd tyranny if we regard it worshipfully, as though it were more than a political device. We have lost all sense of its true meaning when we imagine that the opinion of fifty-one per cent is in some high fashion the true opinion of the whole hundred per cent, or indulge in the sophistry that the rule of a majority is based upon the ultimate equality of man.

V

At Dayton Mr. Bryan contended that in schools supported by the state the majority of the voters had a right to determine what should be taught. If my analysis is correct, there is no fact from which that right can be derived except the fact that the majority is stronger than the minority. It cannot be argued that the majority in Tennessee represented the whole people of Tennessee; nor that fifty-one Tennesseeans are better than forty-nine Tennesseeans; nor that they were better biologists, or better Christians, or better parents, or better Americans. It cannot be said they are necessarily more in tune with the ultimate judgments of God. All that can be said for them is that there are more of them, and that in a world ruled by force it may be necessary to defer to the force they exercise.

When the majority exercises that force to destroy the public schools, the minority may have to yield for a time to this force, but there is no reason why they should accept the result. For the votes of a majority have no intrinsic bearing on the conduct of a school. They are external facts to be taken into consideration like the weather or the hazard of fire. Guidance for a school

can come ultimately only from education, and the question of what shall be taught as biology can be determined only by biologists. The votes of a majority do not settle anything here and they are entitled to no respect whatever. They may be right or they may be wrong; there is nothing in the majority principle which will make them either right or wrong. In the conduct of schools, and especially as to the details of the curriculum, the majority principle is an obvious irrelevance. It is not even a convenient device as it is in the determination say of who shall pay the taxes.

VI

But what good is it to deny the competence of the majority when you have admitted that it has the power to enforce its decisions? I enter this denial myself because I prefer clarity to confusion, and the ascriptions of wisdom to fifty-one per cent seems to me a pernicious confusion. But I do it also because I have some hope that the exorcising of the superstition which has become attached to majority rule will weaken its hold upon the popular imagination, and tend therefore to keep it within convenient limits. Mr. Bryan would not have won the logical victory he won at Dayton if educated people had not been caught in a tangle of ideas which made it seem as if the acknowledgment of the absolutism of the majority was necessary to faith in the final value of the human soul. It seems to me that a rigorous untangling of this confusion may help to arm the minority for a more effective resistance in the future.

H. L. MENCKEN

Critic

Mr. Mencken, honest and fearless skeptic, has done more than most to shake American complacency. He hates anything that seems to him false or insincere and proceeds to attack it with such force that he makes the victims of his criticism exceedingly uncomfortable. The success of his attack lies not only in the honesty of his convictions, but in the vigor of his style. Every word in any of his "prejudices" counts. His essays, of which his volumes of *Prejudices* may be taken as representative for study by the college student, are stimulating, even though one may not always agree with them. One of the most important things that he did for contemporary American letters was to help to "discover" Mr. Dreiser at a time when that author was being condemned by other notable critics. It was typical of Mr. Mencken to find something worthy in a writer who followed no school. Mr. Mencken has had many devoted disciples among the "young intelligensia" of colleges, who, by their very imitation of him, violate his canon of independence.

"In writing, it is not my custom to do much revision. I write slowly, using a typewriter, and think out every sentence very carefully before setting it down. If, after completing a paragraph, I find that I have got into muddy waters, I tear up the whole page and do it over. Once I have got to the end of my MS. there is little to do save correct errors of the machine and minor slips of the mind. I sometimes begin an article without knowing precisely

where it will land me, but that is not often. Usually I have a pretty clear idea of its structure, and do not depart from it materially.

"Most of my books have been made up of reworked articles. But the reworking has seldom involved any extensive rewriting, and almost never any substantial modification of ideas. My problem, in the average case, is simply to make a coherent chapter of three, or four, or five or maybe even a dozen articles. This involves getting rid of duplications and irrelevancies and arranging a new plan. But many of the chapters in my books are made up of single articles, very little changed. That is the case with the one which follows. It was written as an editorial for *The American Mercury*, and it went into *Prejudices*, Sixth Series, substantially unchanged. I wrote it in two evenings, after dinner—half of it one evening and the other half the next.

"I seldom do any writing by daylight. My days are too crowded with editorial business. My correspondence is enormous and I am greatly badgered by telephone calls, both in New York and in Baltimore. I write in the evening, beginning at 7 or 7:30 and stopping at 10. I never work after 10 o'clock. And I never try to write in New York; it is, at least to me, a sheer impossibility. All the writing I do is done in Baltimore, in three-hour sessions, on perhaps 200 evenings of the year."

—H. L. Mencken.

BACH TO BACH! [1]

Ah, at evening, to be drinking from the glassy pond, to have—oh, better than all marrow bones!—the fresh illusion of lapping up the stars!

I take the thought from Patou, the forward-looking hound-dog in Rostand's *Chantecler*. Let him stand as a symbol of the whole melancholy company of crib-haltered but aspiring Americans, their hands doomed to go-getting but their hearts leaping into interstellar space. Patou, lifted to his hind legs and outfitted with pantaloons, would have made a capital Rotarian. Condemned by destiny to a kennel in a barnyard, he yet had that soaring, humorless Vision which is the essence of Rotary, and the secret, no doubt, of its firm hold upon otherwise unpoetical men. For even in the paradise of Babbitt, Babbitt is vaguely uneasy and unhappy. He needs something more, he finds, than is to be found in bulging order-books, in innumerable caravans of prospects, and in belching chimneys and laden trains. He needs something more than is to be got out of blowing spitballs and playing golf. So he searches for that something in the realms of the fancy, where the husks of things fall and their inner sap is revealed. He reads the dithyrambs of Edgar Albert Guest and Arthur Brisbane. He listens to the exhortations of itinerant rhetoricians, gifted and eloquent men, specialists in what it is all about. He intones "Sweet Adeline," and is not ashamed of the tear that babbles down his nose. Thus Babbitt, too, is tantalized by a Grail; he seeks it up and down the gorgeous corridors of his Statler Hotel, past the cigar-stand and the lair of the hat-check gal, and on to the perfumed catacombs of the lovely manicurist and the white-robed chirotonsor. *Non in solo pane vivit homo.* Man cannot live by bread alone. He must hope also. He must dream. He must yearn.

[1] Reprinted from *Prejudices*, 6th series, by H. L. Mencken, by and with permission of and special arrangement with Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., authorized publishers.

The fact explains the Rotarian and his humble brother, the Kiwanian; more, it strips them of not a little of their superficial obnoxiousness. They are fools, but they are not quite damned. If their quest is carried on in motley, they at least trail after better men. And so do all their brethren of Service, great and small—the Americanizers, the Law Enforcers, the boosters and boomers, and the endless others after their kind. At first glance, one sees in these visionaries only noisy and preposterous fellows, disturbing the peace of their betters. But a closer examination is more favorable to them. They are tortured, in their odd, clumsy fashion, by the same ringing in the ears that maddened Ludwig von Beethoven. They suffer from the same optical delusions, painful and not due to sin, that set the prophets of antiquity to howling: they look at a Coolidge or a Hoover and see a Man. What lures them to their bizarre cavortings—and it is surely not to be sniffed at *per se*—is a dim and disturbing mirage of a world more lovely and serene than the one the Lord God has doomed them to live in. What they lack in common, thus diverging from the prophets, is a rational conception of what it ought to be, and might be.

It is somewhat astonishing that 100 per cent Americans should wander so helplessly in this wilderness. For there is a well-paved road across the whole waste, and it issues, at its place of beginning, from the tombs of the Fathers, and their sacred and immemorial dust. Straight as a pistol shot it runs, until at the other end it sweeps up a glittering slope to a shrine upon a high hill. This shrine may be seen on fair days for many leagues, and presents a magnificent spectacle. Its base is confected of the bones of Revolutionary heroes, and out of them rises an heroic effigy of George Washington, in alabaster. Surrounding this effigy, and on a slightly smaller scale, are graven images of Jefferson, Franklin, Nathan Hale, old Sam Adams, John Hancock, and Paul Revere, each with a Bible under his arm and the Stars and Stripes fluttering over his shoulder. A bit to the rear, and without the Bible, is a statue of Thomas Paine. Over the whole structure stretch great bands of the tricolor, in silk, satin,

and other precious fabrics. Red and white stripes run up and down the legs of Washington, and his waistcoat is spattered with stars. The effect is the grandiose one of a Democratic national convention. At night, in the American manner, spotlights play upon the shrine. Hot dogs are on sale nearby, that pilgrims may not hunger, and there is a free park for Fords, with running water and booths for the sale of spare parts. It is the shrine of Liberty!

But where are the pilgrims? One observes the immense parking space and the huge pyramids of hot dogs, and one looks for great hordes of worshipers, fighting their way to the altar-steps. But they are *non est*. Now and then a honeymoon couple wanders in from the rural South or Middle West, to gape at the splendors hand in hand, and now and then a schoolma'am arrives with a flock of her pupils, and lectures them solemnly out of a book. More often, perhaps, a foreign visitor is to be seen, with a *couronne* of tin bay-leaves under his arm. He deposits the *couronne* at the foot of Washington, crosses himself lugubriously, and retires to the nearest hot dog stand. But where are the Americanos? Where are the he-men, heirs to the heroes whose gilded skulls here wait the Judgment Day? Where are the Americanizers? Where are the boosters and boomers? Where are the sturdy Hoover men? Where are the Rotarians, Kiwanians, Lions? Where are the authors of newspaper editorials? The visionaries of Chautauqua? The keepers of the national idealism? Go search for them, if you don't trust the first report of your eyes! Go search for honest men in Congress! They are simply not present. For among all the visions that now inflame foward-looking and up-and-coming men in this great Republic, there is no sign any more of the one that is older than all the rest, and that is the vision of Liberty. The Fathers saw it, and the devotion they gave to it went far beyond three cheers a week. It survived into Jackson's time, and its glow was renewed in Lincoln's. But now it is no more.

The phenomenon is curious, and deserves far more study by eminent psychologists than it has got. I may undertake that

study as an amateur in a work reserved for my senility; at the moment I can only point to the fact. Liberty, to-day, not only lacks its old hot partisans and romantic fanatics in America; it has grown so disreputable that even to mention it, save in terms of a fossilized and hollow rhetoric, becomes a sort of indecorum. I know of but one national organization that advocates it with any genuine heartiness, and that organization, not long ago, was rewarded with a violent denunciation on the floor of the House of Representatives: only the lone Socialist, once in jail himself for the same offense, made bold to defend it. From the chosen elders of the nation, legislative, executive, and judicial, one hears only that demanding it is treason. It is the first duty of the free citizen, it appears, to make a willing sacrifice of the Bill of Rights. He must leap to the business gladly, and with no mental reservations. If he pauses, then he is a Bolshevik.

I venture to argue that this doctrine is evil, and that renouncing it would yield a sweeter usufruct to the American people than all the varieties of Service that now prevail. Of what use is it for Kiwanis to buy wooden legs for one-legged boys if they must grow up as slaves to the Anti-Saloon League? What is the net gain to a boomed and boosted town if its people, coincidentally, lose their right to trial by jury and their inviolability of domicile? Who gives a damn for the Coolidge idealism if its chief agent and executor, even above the Cabinet, is the Board of Temperance, Prohibition and Public Morals of the Methodist Episcopal Church, *i.e.* a gang of snooty ecclesiastics, committed unanimously to the doctrines that Christ should have been jailed for the business at Cana, that God sent she-bears to "tare" forty-two little children because they had made fun of Elisha's bald head, and that Jonah swallowed the whale? Imagine an immigrant studying the new science of Americanism, and coming to the eighteen amendments to the Constitution. What will he make of the discovery that only the Eighteenth embodies a categorical imperative—that all the others must yield to it when they conflict with it—that the

Fourteenth and Fifteenth are not binding upon the Prohibitionists of the South and that the First, Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth are not binding upon Prohibitionists anywhere?

I preach reaction. Bach to Bach! I can't find the word Service in the Constitution, but what is there is sounder and nobler than anything ever heard of where Regular Fellows meet to slap backs and blow spitballs—or, at all events, it *was* there before January 16, 1920. The Fathers, too, had a Vision. They were, in their way, forward-lookers; they were even go-getters. What they dreamed of and fought for was a civilization based upon a body of simple, equitable, and reasonable laws—a code designed to break the chains of lingering mediævalism, and set the individual free. The thing they imagined was a commonwealth of free men, all equal before the law. Some of them had grave doubts about it, and put off making it a reality as long as possible, but in the end the optimists won over the doubters, and they all made the venture together. I am myself no partisan of their scheme. It seems to me that there were fundamental defects in it—that some of their primary assumptions were false. But in their intention, at least, there was something exhilarating, and in it there was also something sound. That something was the premise that the first aim of civilization is to augment and safeguard the dignity of man—that it is worth nothing to be a citizen of a commonwealth which holds the humblest citizen cheaply and uses him ill.

This is what we have lost, and not all the whooping and yelling of new messiahs can cover the fact. The government, as I have shown, becomes the common enemy of all well-disposed and decent men. It commandeers and wastes their money, it assaults and insults them with outrageous and extravagant laws, and it turns loose upon them a horde of professional blackguards, bent only upon destroying their liberties. The individual, facing this pestilence of tyranny and corruption, finds himself quite helpless. If he goes to the agents of the government itself with his protest, he gets only stupid reviling. If he turns to his fellow victims for support, he is lucky to escape

jail. Worse, he is lucky to escape lynching. For the thing has gone so far that the great majority of dull and unimaginative men have begun to take it as a matter of course—almost as the order of nature. The Bill of Rights becomes a mere series of romantic dithyrambs, without solid substance or meaning—say, like the Sermon on the Mount. The school-books of the next generation will omit it. The few fanatics who remember it will keep it on the top shelf, along with the Family Doctor Book, the scientific works of Dr. Marie Scopes, and *Only a Boy*.

Against all this I protest, feebly and too late. The land swarms with Men of Vision, all pining for Service. What I propose is that they forget their brummagem Grails for one week, and concentrate their pep upon a chase that really leads uphill. Let us have a Bill of Rights Week. Let us have a Common Decency Week.

DUNCAN AIKMAN

Critic

Mr. Aikman has been for a number of years an editorial writer for the El Paso *Morning Times*. He is an enemy of Babbittry and our modern standardizing tendencies. He has also studied the history of the early "wild west" days of America. He is the author of *The Home Town Mind*, *Calamity Jane and the Lady Wildcats*, and several recent articles of criticism.

OUR NEW SUB-PLUTOCRACY [1]

I

The party at the Grandburg City Club was exceedingly merry. City Club parties often are. Organized as a public convenience rather than to express any single group's ideal standard of exclusiveness, the City Club sells memberships to everybody in town who can pay for them. Judging by its imposing monthly list of posted delinquents, this includes a good many who can pay but don't. Moreover, with such a constituency, the City Club is aware it can only keep peace in its halls when each and every member refrains from inflicting his standards of behavior on fellow-members. Thus, in creating a convenient and ornate loafing place for Grandburg's prosperous citizens and their out-of-town visitors, it has been tacitly agreed that house rules will be few and their enforcement negligible. Though the deficits from too lavish entertainers have necessitated super-hotel prices, while the waiters penalize observance of the anti-tipping rule with an effective Levantine insolence, the City Club's popularity for "partying" grows from month to month upon the citizenry of Grandburg who have a taste for night life. The local humorists have it that "the old dive gives you all the thrills of hotel life without managers and housedicks."

For the first four hours the party I speak of was merely up to the average. About the "big dinner" table a dozen male faces bloomed above faultless dinner coats, if not exactly with the patrician leanness associated with magazine-cover concepts of masculine gentility, at least with the ruddy glow of prosperous feeding, hard liquor, and hilarity. If the dinner gowns of

[1] Reprinted from *Harper's Magazine*, April, 1929, pp. 570–579, by permission of the author.

their companions betrayed no strikingly individual genius in the art of costume, they successfully conveyed that the ladies patronized shops which discouraged over-dressing and garish distortions of the style patterns. The entertainment facilities were equally orthodox. A radio with flawless loud-speaker attachments blared forth the season's latest and reddest-hot dancing jazz. Waiters dashed in and out from the bar in the so-called locker room with round after round of fashionably potent beverages.

Stimulated by the atmosphere of luxurious revelry, the ladies led the gentlemen by several lengths in the frolic spirit. Feminine voices delivered the more boisterous greetings to latecomers during the preliminary cocktail service, and raised the rumble and patter of table talk to shrieking cadences. Risqué wisecracks began to explode. In the radio's rare intermissions fragments of feminine atavistic solecisms filled the room: "That week-end you had George and I down to the lake." . . . "I'll say it's going good." . . . "You wood'n of hadda chance." . . .

The bacchanal howls were predominantly feminine when two master cut-ups named Jane and Bert ran a race around the rim of the fountain for the queen's trophy—a pitcher-sized potion of gin buck, which the winning lady with boisterous modesty insisted on passing round as a loving cup.

By all of the oldest—some of them almost nine years old—traditions of the City Club, the fountain race should have been the climax of the evening. That it was not, as all but the most unsympathetic group of the City Club's membership are now agreed, was due simply and solely to unlucky coincidence. Midway in the loving-cup ceremony a prominent citizen well known to the dinner party arrived for a midnight snack with two presentable strangers, a man and a woman. The party was expansive, and he was promptly urged to bring his boy and girl friend along and join forces.

Then things began to happen. The strange woman had been dancing hardly two minutes with one of the more befuddled guests when she came dashing in from an ante-room screaming

that she had been insulted. The two strangers, leaving their host in a stupor of embarrassment, picked up their wraps and departed in a seemingly virtuous dudgeon. Thirty seconds later the gentleman who was supposed to have done the insulting and was trying vaguely to recall how his conduct had departed from City Club dark-room conventions, discovered that his watch was missing and simultaneously one of the feminine lives-of-the-party shrieked, "Those crooks got my gold cigarette case."

A chivalrous phalanx rushed down the entrance stairs, caught the strangers in the act of driving off in a car belonging to one of their own members, and smashed the resisting unknown guest's nose while his horrified confederate screamed her sense of outrage until the policeman on the beat arrived. Next day the presentable strangers languished in jail pending an investigation, while the story was duly displayed pyrotechnically on the front pages of local newspapers.

To be sure, like most adjustable scandals, this one collapsed after two days of frenzied publicity. Car theft prevented and jewelry restored, it was simpler to have presentable strangers on their way than in jail holding receptions to police reporters. The City Club's magnates talked sedately—for publication—about investigations and reformatory discipline; but when it was explained that the party's indiscretions had been due solely to high spirits, and after it was discovered that the disconcerting guests had received visitors' cards from no less a person than a club officer, who had had the honor of being formally introduced to the strangers by the bartender in a local speakeasy, all purgation processes were charitably discontinued. The City Club settled down to consider it all as a normal mischance of its celebrated prankishness.

Shortly after this happy solution had been achieved I dropped in for a chat with old Alex Carson beside the base-burner in his venerable law office. Through the loss of his fortune and his drowsing privileges at the defunct Grandburg Gentlemen's Whist and Assembly Club, Alex since his seventieth birthday has become something of a social philosopher.

"Well, I hardly expected that anything would be done about it," was his comment, "after I learned that the host was the leading automobile insurance salesman for three states.

"But, by Jupiter," he added, indulging his Puritan fondness for classical swearing, "it does cheer an aged man's malice to see the sub-plutocracy now and then dip its feet back into its native element."

II

With old Alex's permission, I suggest conferring the name of the sub-plutocracy on a few million Americans. They are the people who, by their own exertions and by meeting the industrial market's demand for increasingly specialized services, have risen during less than a single generation from the laboring class or the frugal cottage and country-store economic environment of their origins to incomes of ten thousand dollars to one hundred thousand dollars a year. They may lack the means for the diversions of the supreme plutocrats—private yachting expeditions in Mediterranean waters and grouse-shooting parties on Scottish estates. But they can afford the amusements, the luxuries, and the more or less polite activities of local social leadership as easily as an old-fashioned farmer could afford three eggs for his breakfast.

Perhaps as good an example of the sub-plutocracy's rise as any can be found in a Midwestern city which I knew in my childhood. In the 1890's it had a population of between forty and fifty thousand with a normally varied representation, for that period, of the mercantile, professional, and industrial interests. As I recall it, the families who set its standards of taste and social conduct could hardly have numbered one hundred. Their leadership had a strictly economic base, but it was significant of more than mere spending power. "To belong" one had to have a permanent stake in the community. Small or large, one had to assume certain obvious responsibilities to its life and growth and human relationships. One had to be, that is, the head of a business firm, or a factory, or a bank, or an

independently practicing professional man, or a son or younger male relative of one of the principal houses in training for similar responsibilities. In addition, there were a few old families, dating back to the early era of settlement about the time of the War of 1812, who represented something faintly approaching a blood and landed interest. In short, here was a small, unobtrusive local aristocracy accepted for the depth and tenacity of its roots rather than for the ostentatious spread of its foliage.

Newcomers even of obvious means, unless they happened to be vouched for by members of the group or by similar groups in neighboring cities, usually spent years or decades on the probation of formal acquaintance before they were fully admitted. Mere social snobbery of the conventional sort did not dictate these exclusions, but the established order did demand that the newcomers prove that they were persons of business capacity and probity, that their women folk could be counted on for discreet behavior and cultural refinement, as these terms were understood in the Cleveland epoch, and that they were settling down to become permanent members of the community rather than acquisitive transients.

Within the community, rising from the ranks was possible but rare. Below the proprietors and owners of the leading business enterprises, there were few who had either the means or the cultural background to aspire to social leadership. Those next in command under the factory owners were the works superintendents—excellent fellows and universally well regarded, but chiefly glorified foremen with the old-fashioned skilled mechanic's social viewpoints and cultural limitations. In the banks, below the president, the single vice-president, and the cashier, there were only clerks and bookkeepers. The store owners employed sales clerks, bookkeepers, and shipping room roustabouts instead of high-salaried sub-executives and trade technicians. Instead of sales managers, district and central, they relied on thirty-dollar-a-week drummers. All these people were necessarily frugal in their economic standards and, for

the most part, lacking in social and cultural advantages. Now and then, to be sure, families rose from these strata to a modest or even a considerable affluence; but as a rule this was achieved only by rigid, often niggardly, economies, and not until the head of the house was well along in years and beyond social aspirations. Recognition, therefore, often by the parvenu's own consent, was deferred until the second generation, and often, when at the family's rise the second generation was beyond the age for marrying into the charmed circle, until the third.

In all this conservatism the members of the group were concerned very little about financial prestige, negligibly about ancestors, but a great deal about their standards. Their code was not for its times aggressively puritanical. They had their full quota of condoned private scandal, of tolerated rakes and wastrels. But they did hold outward decency and decorum in conduct and the total absence in personal traits of what they called "commonness," to be essential requirements. They were a genial, even a democratic people, and were frequently on friendly and even confidential terms with a large number of fellow-citizens who were not dining-out acquaintances. But they felt their position keenly as leaders and representatives of the community's best, and believed that they owed it this much exclusiveness. So while many of the leaders were not more than one generation from the soil, while the majority of them lacked the educational training and the standardized breeding mark of the colleges, while the town Crœsus's income was never fabulously reported at more than fifty thousand a year, and while many of the so-called "prominent" took no vacations and walked to business every day because they could not afford travel and carriages, the little bourgeois aristocracy was composed almost without exception of those who could keep a code of which the principal object was to outlaw vulgarity. For example, for years after the Country Club was founded, and while its catering force still consisted of a lone negro attendant who would serve one's home-prepared picnic suppers for a tip, local

financial magnates were occasionally blackballed for no worse crimes than general parvenu coarseness and a native antipathy to standard colloquial English.

From my researches among my contemporaries and elders I gather that there was nothing quixotic or unusual about this pattern of leadership. In the last generation of the old century scores of American cities, between the gregarious villages and the clique-complicated metropolises, received their social tone and traditions from just such groups. Ancestors may have counted for a little more in the East and South, raw wealth in the far Western boom towns. But from Worcester to San Diego, the leadership was essentially uniform. American tastes and manners, American codes of decorous conduct, and to a considerable extent—since the old régime took its duties of informed opinion seriously—American intellectual interests were formed by local bourgeois aristocracies, with a profound interest in their communities and a healthy rudimentary sense of *noblesse oblige*.

III

The picture, however, began to blur at the turn of the century, and now at the close of the third decade it has been practically everywhere effaced. Prior to the boom times following the Spanish War, the old order had been able to exclude or accept the families rising to its own economic levels on what it conceived to be in each case the individual's merits. There were, after all, comparatively few of them. A society composed so largely of the families of the heads of the chief local business enterprises was largely protected by its mere prosperity. The number of important business enterprises was strictly limited by the locality's purchasing power and trade opportunities; and these, except in a few exotically productive communities—like the oil and mining centers—increased slowly. A decade in which a score of new families acquired even the barest economic pretensions to admission within the dominant group was one of relatively rapid expansion, and even the most anemic of local

aristocracies could easily enforce its standards on two newly rich families a year.

But the old order's solidarity began to crumble when new economic equals began arriving in scores and hundreds. And this pace in economic self-advancement is precisely what the twentieth century expansion of business and its revolutions in industrial organizations presently contributed. Where the local aristocracies had been dealing with candidates for admission one at a time, they suddenly, on a national scale after 1900, found their thinly defended caste lines beset with regiments, and a little later in the War and post-War booms, with armies.

That the cities grew and the purchasing power of their individual inhabitants grew, was only a part of the story. This opened the way for a sudden unprecedented increase in the number of local business enterprises large and important enough for their heads to claim enumeration among the community's "first families." But at the same time business was supplying an increasing horde of economically eligible candidates, classified industrially in ways which the former little close social corporations of independent local capitalists had never dreamed of.

Factories and public service corporations, which had been operated by foremen and superintendents drawn mainly from the laboring classes, suddenly began employing staffs of technicians whose gentility was more or less vouched for by college diplomas, and whose salaries, more significantly, far exceeded the average for the older professional classes of lawyers and physicians. Commerce and industry, whose products had previously been distributed by impecunious "drummers" of loudly checked suits and small-town pool-room mannerisms, began disposing of them through sales managers and district representatives whose wages and commissions aroused many an oldtime banker's envy. One after another vast new industries of national scope—the motor car and motor fuel companies, followed by radio, domestic electrical appliances, refrigerating systems, and now by aircraft—dotted the local and regional metropolises with agencies and distributing centers staffed by

managers and corps of expert salesmen whose sum total of rewards ran, even in the smaller fields, into the millions. Professional and semi-professional services multiplied to gratify the new complex prosperity and to sell themselves to the new technic. Advertising and expert accounting agencies, consulting and efficiency engineers, realty investment corporations were literally born to flourish, while banks added vice-presidents in flocks to take care of each phase of their special interests from livestock loans to the allurement of women customers. Specialists in increasingly more varied and recondite technical branches of practice imposed themselves upon the family lawyers, doctors, and dentists of the ancient régime, demanding fees and retainers in proportion to their exuberantly avowed expertness. Undertakers moved out of the back rooms of furniture stores and established themselves in mortuary palaces with palatial price lists.

Inevitably, when these fortune-winning hordes began pressing against the barriers of the older order, the barriers went down. The old order had no pretensions of blood or landed estate to rally about which were not artificial and patently ridiculous. As democratic Americans, its leaders officially disclaimed the snobbery of mere "position." Its cultural codes, while excellent and promising in themselves, were too thin and recently acquired to serve as defenses against a grand assault. Most fatal of all, the old order was, after all, a bourgeois and business leadership. The new era was one of generally rising living standards; and to maintain their own affluence—certainly to increase it—the members of the old order must win the newly well-to-do as customers and clients. If the professional and financial favors of the new specialists and technicians and the local pro-consuls of the great corporations could be had only at the price of social recognition, social recognition they must be given.

So from heads of the house all over the United States during the first quarter of the century, in the cities between the fifty-thousand mark and the national metropolises, orders to this

effect were issued. And in the long run they were obeyed. The old Babbittry of precise decorum took the new Babbittry of ostentatious familiarities to its bosom. The newly prosperous were too numerous and too wealthy to offend.

Or it would be perhaps still more accurate to say of the majority of communities that the new Babbittry extended the light of its commercial favor and social condescensions to those members of the mauve-decade aristocracies who proved by their amenability that they deserved it. For by the time the sub-plutocracy began arriving in its full war strength it was plain that the old order faced not so much a problem of resistance and exclusion as of survival on any terms. Indeed, wherever the struggle was prolonged into the 1920's, it was not a question of whether the old "first families" would invite the newly affluent to their dinner parties. In thousands of individual instances and scores of communities it was a question of whether, in the newcomers' round of expensive and meticulously fashionable, if somewhat garish, entertainment, the "old families" could show the properly democratic adaptability and make the financial grade.

With the aid of the wider acquaintanceships and mitigated prejudices of their younger generations, most of them probably have managed it. To be sure, many fell by the economic wayside; and in a few of the older and most conservative communities, where the blood interest is strong, remnants may have retired into a sourly critical aloofness. But in the vast majority of cases the older aristocracies appear not so much to have accepted the newer orders as to have merged with them to the point of disappearance. In 1899 the nation could count its citizens of modest prosperity who could be relied upon for responsible local social leadership by tens of thousands. In 1929 it counts in millions the exponents of a new type of "social prominence" whose prosperity is less modest and whose sense of social responsibility is, to put it mildly, what it pleases. The new sub-plutocracy has not simply won a place in the picture. It has become the whole masterpiece.

IV

How it adorns the contemporary social scene may be suggested by a further reference to the Middle-western community we have just been discussing. Since the 1890's the city has a little less than doubled its population. But the intimate little corporation of one hundred or less families which furnished the leadership and set the standards of culture and manners thirty years ago has expanded, under generous recruiting standards and the new prosperity, to a loose aggregation of considerably more than five hundred. Counting wives and offspring old enough to be included in the "younger set," several thousand of its citizens, male and female, are recognized as eligible to participate more or less actively in what is locally regarded as glamorous social life. They belong to the right clubs, attend and give entertainments which the local society reporters consider important, own the better makes of motor cars, travel somewhat luxuriously, take expensive vacations at resorts of some social prestige, and in general amuse themselves as local gentry of the technological age are supposed to do. Superficially a far wider range of sophisticated diversions is open to them than was open to their 1895 predecessors, for whom vacations were rare, and who considered European travel positively exotic.

Yet, under the glittering surface, life has lost a good deal of its quality. The swarm of the new élite is so great that all sense of responsible solidarity is lost. There is a vast lot of milling about among casual acquaintances. But nobody cares whether or not so large and impersonal a group keeps its dignity, whether or not it sets an example of good breeding, whether or not it provides the best possible representation of the community in manners, the outward decencies, and intelligence. The new Country Club is as large and almost as expensive as a cathedral, but hardly more difficult, socially speaking, to join than the Y.M.C.A. The Midwest Club is its downtown counterpart and, although the City Club scandal previously mentioned did not occur there, its standards are such that no one would have been greatly perturbed if it had.

Under these auspices, incongruities inevitably appear which the old order's conservatism would have made impossible. Your dancing partner at a club cabaret entertainment may wear a gown chosen with the impeccable taste of the most exclusive fashion magazines, but her accent and syntax are those of a shop girl—of the type, that is, which flourished before the higher sales-technicians learned to train these professionally persuasive damsels to speak in the birdlike cadences which formerly distinguished only the products of our most expensive finishing schools. Somewhat later her husband is "pleased to meet you," and in a mumble of solecisms conducts you through a long-winded and pointless account of the large party that was "thrown" when he bought an eight-cylinder car from a mutual acquaintance in the automobile business. You discover that you have been talking with the son of a miner who by hook or crook worked himself through a small technical institute and then, as the first step on his path toward becoming the twenty-thousand-dollar-a-year technical adviser to a coal magnate, married his landlady's daughter.

It is all strictly American and highly commendable. But repeat the formula in varying intensity a few hundred times for each large social assemblage in any typical American city of 1929, and you have accounted for the sub-plutocracy's origins, its social experience, and its present necessary limitations. You have accounted for the fact that so impressive a proportion of the well-groomed and fashionably diverted persons one meets cannot with natural grace execute or receive the simplest formalities of introduction, cannot sustain conversation above the crude levels of personalities, personal interests, and ribaldry. They express themselves in dialect which varies from the doubtful to the execrable, and in their high moments of revelry they indulge in a noisy conspicuousness of conduct suggesting street hoodlums out for a joy-ride.

Business expansion in the first third of the century has made places near the top of its lavish pay-rolls for several times more beneficiaries than the old "first families" could furnish. Pick-

ing the new favorites by the necessarily rough selective system of chance and merit, industry has flung into the luxury classes hundreds of thousands drawn from social levels familiar neither with prosperity nor with the forms and inhibitions of good breeding. The sub-plutocracy thus created has arrived so rapidly and in such numbers that it could not possibly be trained for responsible social leadership by its overwhelmed and bewildered predecessors. It thrust itself—or was thrust—to the center of the stage inadequately prepared to carry on the American cultural tradition as the older local aristocracies had left it.

V

In his search for the origins of "the mucker pose" Mr. James Truslow Adams has suggested, but not fully analyzed, the effects of this vast experiment in quick gentry-production. The sub-plutocracy's very deficiencies became the reigning tastes and manners because, numerically, it had swallowed the older aristocracies whole, and no elements were left in the social structure strong enough to impose an effective veto.

In one respect, its attitude toward these deficiencies was creditable. Parvenus of the older type had pretended that deficiencies did not exist. In all the ages of quick fortune-making from the Hamiltonian currency stabilization to the gaudy '70's, the comic publications were full of jests at the expense of newly affluent families who cultivated a more namby-pamby "niceness" than the Victorians, who in matters of silk hats, coachmen's liveries, and bric-a-brac went in for display more than the millionaires, who hired genealogists to supply them with family pedigrees longer than those of the peers of England. The newly rich of the twentieth century scorned such poses. They were sprung from the soil, or at any rate sprung from the ranks of skilled labor, village store-keepers, and the respectable but frugal employees of commerce in the cities. They made no bones about it. If the older "first families" did not like the traces of their early environment which survived the newcomers' contacts with local business magnates and

their possible four years at some fresh-water college, the "first families," in the newcomers' expressive phrase, could "go chase themselves."

The "first families" chased the newcomers' favors instead, so that the latter felt all the less impulse to modify their social inheritance. They cultivated no affected accents, and confidently abused syntax with such phrases as "between her and I," instead of parading an excessive correctness of speech. They quarreled with their favorite head waiters in public, and did not scruple to berate hotel managers with fishwifely violence when the priceless prerogative of "service" was at stake. In their hospitalities, both domestic and public, they preserved the slap-on-the-back informality, the unfettered general rough-house inclinations, and the broad humor of the plain people out for a jamboree. Decorum, to their self-satisfied conscience, was the deliberately distressing invention of old-fashioned "big stiffs."

So a repeal of the so-called "high hat" conventions became, perhaps, the sub-plutocracy's foremost contribution to American manners. Older members of the hinterland aristocracies resisted vainly for more or less extended periods, and various individual grand seigniors remain impotently uncompromising still. But the commercially far-sighted and the younger generations of the established houses succumbed to the invaders' mores virtually without a struggle. If the newcomers were being received as equals and their hospitality was being cherished, it decidedly would not pay, either in business or in the traffic of social favors, to reject their ways of conducting and entertaining themselves. When parties—or syntax—"got rough," obviously it would pay the scions of the older houses to "get rough" too.

The heirs of the earlier gentry, besides gratifying certain atavistic inclinations, readily found reasons for abandoning the sterner standards and accepting the current stock of sophistication. Had not both scientific and Sunday supplement psychology taught them—veraciously enough in many particulars—

that the Victorian reticences bound the human spirit with corselets of positively unsanitary suppressions? Had not the more erudite learned from their reading that from the Stuart Restoration to the post-War brood all genuine aristocracies had treated morals and conventions contemptuously? Finally, with prohibition, the more politically conscious discovered that getting drunk as a long-shoreman at dinner parties might be a gentleman's—or even a lady's—appropriate way of proclaiming an honorable distaste for the eighteenth amendment. The born gentlemen whose tastes for crude pastimes and pornography Mr. Adams lamented with descriptive accuracy, thus may have been at one and the same time class-conscious aristocrats parading their freedom from the taboos of bourgeois respectability and practical self-salesmen out to persuade depositors and professional associates, who happened to be social intimates and fellow-golfers, that they did not consider themselves superior persons.

The native genius of the sub-plutocracy has made, so far, no significant cultural contributions to compensate for its vulgarity. Previous types of parvenus may have helped to flavor national taste with healthy provincialisms, enriched in early New England at least by genuine folk arts and in the South, until the most recent era, by gracious forms of manners. But the latest arrivals, transplanted hither and thither by their business and professional interests, "prominent" in Hartford in January, in Houston by next Thanksgiving, and in Spokane by the following Easter, regard freedom from provincial traces and an easy, energetically familiar at-homeness in our standardized, luncheon-club cosmopolitanism as the foremost sign of a dividend-paying social eligibility. Better educated, and sophisticated by wider social contacts than any previous generation of the self-elevated, they lack no confidence in their own *savoir faire* and worldly wisdom. The reticences of the well-bred and the individualism of the intellectuals are to them mere pretenses, to be tolerated only when those who are so unfortunate as to hold to them are also provided with the means to promote the

deals of the newly affluent and to share in their standardized pleasures. Thus, even where vulgarity is held in abeyance, the sub-plutocracy's main contribution to the flavor of American society is the intensification of standardizing forces.

For, the sub-plutocrats apparently reason, here is a short life and the means to enjoy it. The way to enjoy it is to belong to the biggest clubs, play the most popular games, stop at the best-known hotels, travel to the most advertised-places, read (according to the year's fashion) the most talked-of risqué or detective fiction, see the most applauded plays and movies, keep the latest jazz going on the radio, dress—it makes "a good impression" on other sub-plutocrats—in the styles recommended by the fashion magazines of widest circulation, and hold, when the discussion of anything beyond golf, business, and the latest night club attractions becomes obligatory, the most orthodox and least contentious opinions. Those who choose to do otherwise may possess what once passed for brains and breeding. But until they have vouched for themselves with the requisite commercial talents and assets, their eligibility to "good society" is questionable.

And in defining eligibility the sub-plutocracy recognizes no responsibility to any ideal standard of social leadership. It knows that it came up from the social and economic lower regions by money power alone, and, just as it is content to absorb members of better-bred and educated orders who hold on to their personal fortunes, it will readily accept the latest plebeian or vulgarian who has risen by its own method. With the membership as well as with the house committee of the City Clubs, the policy prevails that "the sky is the limit."

Thus, as the super-salesmen, sub-executives, branch managers, agency promoters, and traffickers in expert and technical services multiply in the land, our newest social order multiplies with them. Nor are there signs in the expanding pace of business that the recruiting process will presently slacken. 1930's new arrivals from the ranks will, by all the present auguries, exceed those of 1920 and fall only a little behind the

epic upsurge of 1919–20. The standardizing pressure upon taste and the vulgarizing pressure upon manners and pleasure will be reinforced by such newcomers as long as the mill of prosperity feeds new "first families" into the social laboratory faster than gentility can be synthesized.

VI

I suppose that all members of the old order, real or putative, should be very glum at these prospects, and that lamentations over the extinction of culture by the "new barbarians"—the phrase is Professor Wilbur Cortez Abbott's—are strictly in order. Yet I doubt if, in the longer view, lamentations are warranted. The defeat of the old standards of social leadership makes things temporarily uncomfortable for the fastidious. But the sub-plutocracy's eventual contributions to American culture will not be made in its raw stage, but after it has begun to realize its larger possibilities of development.

After all, the sub-plutocracy, in moving into exclusive residential quarters, has brought vulgarity in its baggage only incidentally. Among its more significant belongings are energy, native intelligence, and more and more, as industry demands an increasing expertness of its professional aides and technicians, a sound basis of intellectual training. If temporarily it has relegated *savoir faire* to the rear as a social necessity, even this has been done on the wholesome principle that aristocracies, including the most modest local ones, must be able to serve the community in more important ways than by giving decorous dinner parties and cultivating a "refined taste" in art. By insisting that "first families" earn their keep in the major activities of practical life—which happen to be business in twentieth-century America as were piracy and service to the crown in Elizabethan England—the newcomers are sanely helping to anchor our future social leadership to reality.

With this much to its credit, the sub-plutocracy has a reasonably clear field ahead to rid itself of the obvious liabilities of its

origins. And already the more significant omens suggest that standardization and vulgarity are its points of departure rather than its destination.

For all the group's mass shoddiness, thousands of its members throughout the nation, and numerous individuals in almost every community, have acquired æsthetic and intellectual sensibilities and the restraints of good breeding along with moderate riches. Moreover, it is the sub-plutocracy's second generation, in the main, which fills our colleges beyond the over-crowding limit. At least a few hundred of these grandchildren of the "nobodies" of the "age of innocence" graduate annually with the nation's older cultural inheritance fully absorbed, and ready to assert an independent individualism graciously and easily. Even the least pliant material leaves the campus for practical life benefited by a few years' intensive practice in ingratiating manners, and appreciably more prone to recognize the desirability of self-effacement and sound syntax in a brawling world.

On these improving foundations, I suspect, the Republic may yet, within another generation or two, rest its most typically modern and democratic experiment: that of entrusting social and cultural leadership to a valid aristocracy several millions strong.

IRVING BABBITT

Critic

Mr. Babbitt has been a teacher, lecturer, and writer on English and, more particularly, French literature. Since 1912 he has been a professor of French literature at Harvard University. He has been a lecturer at home and abroad: at Yale and Stanford, and at the Sorbonne. He has written such book of criticism of French literature as *Rousseau and Romanticism* and he has studied American literary and educational problems, having published *Literature and the American College* (of particular import to the college student) and other books and essays on these subjects. His "The Critic and American Life," after its publication in *The Forum* for February, 1928, received international praise.

"I should sum up any advice I have to give to your readers as follows: It is high time to get back to the Horatian precept that the source of good writing is clear thinking. Ever since the rise of the Romantic movement in the 18th century, a conception of creation has prevailed that puts entirely too much emphasis on "genius" and spontaneous overflow and not enough emphasis on sustained effort and conscious culture. Culture implies the assimilation of the experience of the past as embodied in great art and literature and then the bringing to bear imaginatively of this experience upon the needs of the present."

—Irving Babbitt.

THE CRITIC AND AMERICAN LIFE [1]

A frequent remark of the French about Americans is: "they're children"; which, interpreted, means that from the French point of view Americans are childishly uncritical. The remark is relevant only in so far as it refers to general critical intelligence. In dealing with the special problems of a commercial and industrial society Americans have shown that they can be abundantly critical. Certain Americans, for example, have developed a critical keenness in estimating the value of stocks and bonds that is nothing short of uncanny. The very persons, however, who are thus keen in some particular field are, when confronted with questions that call for general critical intelligence, often puerile. Yet in an age like the present, which is being subjected to a constant stream of propaganda in everything from the choice of its religion to its cigarettes, genera critical intelligence would seem desirable.

As a matter of fact, most persons nowadays aspire to be not critical but creative. We have not merely creative poets and novelists, but creative readers and listeners and dancers. Lately a form of creativeness has appeared that may in time swallow up all the others—creative salesmanship. The critic himself has caught the contagion and also aspires to be creative. He is supposed to become so when he receives from the creation of another, conceived as pure temperamental overflow, so vivid an impression that, when passed through his temperament, it issues forth as a fresh creation. What is eliminated in both critic and creator is any standard that is set above temperament and that therefore might interfere with their eagerness to get themselves expressed.

[1] Reprinted from *The Forum*, February, 1928, by special permission of the publishers.

This notion of criticism as self-expression is important for our present subject, for it has been adopted by the writer who is, according to the last edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "the greatest critical force in America"—Mr. H. L. Mencken. "The critic is first and last," says Mr. Mencken, "simply trying to express himself; he is trying to achieve thereby for his own inner ego the grateful feeling of a function performed, a tension relieved, a katharsis attained which Wagner achieved when he wrote *Die Walküre*, and a hen achieves every time she lays an egg." This creative self-expression, as practiced by himself and others, has, according to Mr. Mencken, led to a salutary stirring up of the stagnant pool of American letters: "To-day for the first time in years there is strife in American criticism. . . . Heretics lay on boldly and the professors are forced to make some defence. Often going further they attempt counter-attacks. Ears are bitten off, noses are bloodied. There are wallops both above and below the belt."

But it may be that criticism is something more than Mr. Mencken would have us believe, more in short than a squabble between Bohemians, each eager to capture the attention of the public for his brand of self-expression. To reduce criticism indeed to the satisfaction of a temperamental urge, to the uttering of one's gustos and disgustos (in Mr. Mencken's case chiefly the latter) is to run counter to the very etymology of the word which implies discrimination and judgment. The best one would anticipate from a writer like Mr. Mencken, possessing an unusual verbal virtuosity and at the same time temperamentally irresponsible, is superior intellectual vaudeville. One must grant him, however, certain genuine critical virtues—for example, a power of shrewd observation within rather narrow limits. Yet the total effect of his writing is nearer to intellectual vaudeville than to serious criticism.

The serious critic is more concerned with achieving a correct scale of values and so seeing things proportionately than with self-expression. His essential virtue is poise. The specific benefit he confers is to act as a moderating influence on the opposite in-

sanities between which mankind in the lump is constantly tending to oscillate—oscillations that Luther compares to the reelings of a drunken peasant on horseback. The critic's survey of any particular situation may very well seem satirical. The complaint that Mr. Mencken is too uniformly disgruntled in his survey of the American situation rather misses the point. Behind the pleas for more constructiveness it is usually easy to detect the voice of the booster. A critic who did not get beyond a correct diagnosis of existing evils might be very helpful. If Mr. Mencken has fallen short of being such a diagnostician, the failure is due not to his excess of severity but to his lack of discrimination.

The standards with reference to which men have discriminated in the past have been largely traditional. The outstanding fact of the present period, on the other hand, has been the weakening of traditional standards. An emergency has arisen not unlike that with which Socrates sought to cope in ancient Athens. Anyone who is untraditional and seeks at the same time to be discriminating must almost necessarily own Socrates as his master. As is well known, Socrates sought above all to be discriminating in his use of general terms. The importance of the art of inductive defining that he devised may perhaps best be made clear by bringing together two sayings, one of Napoleon —"Imagination governs mankind"—and one of John Selden —"Syllables govern mankind." Before allowing one's imagination and finally one's conduct to be controlled by a general term, it would seem wise to submit it to a Socratic scrutiny.

It is, therefore, unfortunate that at a time like the present, which plainly calls for a Socrates, we should instead have got a Mencken. One may take as an example of Mr. Mencken's failure to discriminate adequately, his attitude toward the term that for several generations past has been governing the imagination of multitudes—democracy. His view of democracy is simply that of Rousseau turned upside down, and nothing, as has been remarked, resembles a hollow so much as a swelling. A distinction of which he has failed to recognize the importance is that

between a direct or unlimited and a constitutional democracy. In the latter we probably have the best thing in the world. The former, on the other hand, as all thinkers of any penetration from Plato and Aristotle down have perceived, leads to the loss of liberty and finally to the rise of some form of despotism. The two conceptions of democracy involve not merely incompatible views of government but ultimately of human nature. The desire of the constitutional democrat for institutions that act as checks on the immediate will of the people implies a similar dualism in the individual—a higher self that acts restrictively on his ordinary and impulsive self. The partisan of unlimited democracy on the other hand is an idealist in the sense that the term assumed in connection with the so-called romantic movement. His faith in the people is closely related to the doctrine of natural goodness proclaimed by the sentimentalists of the eighteenth century and itself marking an extreme recoil from the dogma of total depravity. The doctrine of natural goodness favors the free temperamental expansion that I have already noticed in speaking of the creative critic.

It is of the utmost importance, however, if one is to understand Mr. Mencken, to discriminate between two types of temperamentalist—the soft and sentimental type, who cherishes various "ideals," and the hard, or Nietzschean type, who piques himself on being realistic. As a matter of fact, if one sees in the escape from traditional controls merely an opportunity to live temperamentally, it would seem advantageous to pass promptly from the idealistic to the Nietzschean phase, sparing oneself as many as possible of the intermediary disillusions. It is at all events undeniable that the rise of Menckenism has been marked by a certain collapse of romantic idealism in the political field and elsewhere. The numerous disillusions that have supervened upon the War have provided a favoring atmosphere.

The symptoms of Menckenism are familiar: a certain hardness and smartness and disposition to rail at everything that, rightly or wrongly, is established and respected; a tendency to identify the real with what Mr. Mencken terms "the cold and clammy

facts" and to assume that the only alternative to facing these facts is to fade away into sheer romantic unreality. These and similar traits are becoming so widely diffused that, whatever one's opinion of Mr. Mencken as a writer and thinker, one must grant him representativeness. He is a chief prophet at present of those who deem themselves emancipated but who are, according to Mr. Brownell, merely unbuttoned.

The crucial point in any case is one's attitude toward the principle of control. Those who stand for this principle in any form or degree are dismissed by the emancipated as reactionaries or, still graver reproach, as Puritans. Mr. Mencken would have us believe that the historical Puritan was not even sincere in his moral rigorism, but was given to "lamentable transactions with loose women and fiery jugs." This may serve as a sample of the assertions, picturesquely indiscriminate, by which a writer wins immediate notoriety at the expense of his permanent reputation. The facts about the Puritan happen to be complex and need to be dealt with very Socratically. It has been affirmed that the point of view of the Puritan was Stoical rather than truly Christian, and the affirmation is not wholly false. The present discussion of the relationship between Puritanism and the rise of capitalism with its glorification of the acquisitive life also has its justification. It is likewise a fact that the Puritan was from the outset unduly concerned with reforming others as well as himself, and this trait relates him to the humanitarian meddler or "wowser" of the present day, who is Mr. Mencken's pet aversion.

Yet it remains true that awe and reverence and humility are Christian virtues and that there was some survival of these virtues in the Puritan. For a representative Puritan like Jonathan Edwards they were inseparable from the illumination of grace, from what he terms "a divine and supernatural light." In the passage from the love and fear of God of an Edwards to the love and service of man professed by the humanitarian, something has plainly dropped out, something that is very near the centre. What has tended to disappear is the inner life with the special

type of control it imposes. With the decline of this inner control there has been an increasing resort to outer control. Instead of the genuine Puritan we then have the humanitarian legalist who passes innumerable laws for the control of people who refuse to control themselves. The activity of our uplifters is scarcely suggestive of any "divine and supernatural light." Here is a discrimination of the first importance that has been obscured by the muddy thinking of our half-baked intelligentsia. One is thus kept from perceiving the real problem, which is to retain the inner life, even though one refuse to accept the theological nightmare with which the Puritan associated it. More is involved in the failure to solve this problem than the Puritan tradition. It is the failure of our contemporary life in general. Yet, unless some solution is reached by a full and free exercise of the critical spirit, one remains a mere modernist and not a thoroughgoing and complete modern; for the modern spirit and the critical spirit are in their essence one.

What happens, when one sets out to deal with questions of this order without sufficient depth of reflection and critical maturity, may be seen in Mr. Sinclair Lewis's last novel. He has been lured from art into the writing of a wild diatribe which, considered even as such, is largely beside the mark. If the Protestant Church is at present threatened with bankruptcy, it is not because it has produced an occasional Elmer Gantry. The true reproach it has incurred is that, in its drift toward modernism, it has lost its grip not merely on certain dogmas but, simultaneously, on the facts of human nature. It has failed above all to carry over in some modern and critical form the truth of a dogma that unfortunately receives much support from these facts—the dogma of original sin. At first sight Mr. Mencken would appear to have a conviction of evil—when, for example, he reduces democracy in its essential aspect to a "combat between jackals and jackasses"—that establishes at least one bond between him and the austere Christian.

The appearance, however, is deceptive. The Christian is conscious above all of the "old Adam" in himself: hence his

humility. The effect of Mr. Mencken's writing, on the other hand, is to produce pride rather than humility, a pride ultimately based on flattery. The reader, especially the young and callow reader, identifies himself imaginatively with Mr. Mencken and conceives of himself as a sort of morose and sardonic divinity surveying from some superior altitude an immeasurable expanse of "boobs." This attitude will not seem especially novel to anyone who has traced the modern movement. One is reminded in particular of Flaubert, who showed a diligence in collecting bourgeois imbecilities comparable to that displayed by Mr. Mencken in his *Americana*. Flaubert's discovery that one does not add to one's happiness in this way would no doubt be dismissed by Mr. Mencken as irrelevant, for he has told us that he does not believe in happiness. Another discovery of Flaubert's may seem to him more worthy of consideration. "By dint of railing at idiots," Flaubert reports, "one runs the risk of becoming idiotic oneself."

It may be that the only way to escape from the unduly complacent cynicism of Mr. Mencken and his school is to reaffirm once more the truths of the inner life. In that case it would seem desirable to disengage, so far as possible, the principle of control on which the inner life finally depends from mere creeds and traditions and assert it as a psychological fact; a fact, moreover, that is neither "cold" nor "clammy." The coldness and clamminess of much so-called realism arises from its failure to give this fact due recognition. A chief task, indeed, of the Socratic critic would be to rescue the noble term "realist" from its present degradation. A view of reality that overlooks the element in man that moves in an opposite direction from mere temperament, the specifically human factor in short, may prove to be singularly one-sided. Is the Puritan, John Milton, when he declares that "he who reigns within himself and rules passions, desires, and fears is more than a king," less real than Mr. Theodore Dreiser when he discourses in his peculiar dialect of "those rearranging chemisms upon which all the morality or immorality of the world is based"?

As a matter of fact, according to the degree and nature of the exercise of the principle of control, one may distinguish two main types of realism which may be denominated respectively religious and humanistic: as the principle of control falls into abeyance, a third type tends to emerge, which may be termed naturalistic realism. That the decline of the traditional controls has been followed by a lapse to the naturalistic level is indubitable. The characteristic evils of the present age arise from unrestraint and violation of the law of measure and not, as our modernists would have us believe, from the tyranny of taboos and traditional inhibitions. The facts cry to heaven. The delicate adjustment that is required between the craving for emancipation and the need of control has been pointed out once for all by Goethe, speaking not as a Puritan but as a clear-eyed man of the world. Everything, he says, that liberates the spirit without a corresponding growth in self-mastery is pernicious. This one sentence would seem to cover the case of our "flaming youth" rather completely.

The movement in the midst of which we are still living was from its inception unsound in its dealing with the principle of control. It is vain to expect from the dregs of this movement what its "first sprightly running failed to give." Mr. Carl Sandburg speaks of the "marvelous rebellion of man at all signs reading 'Keep off.'" An objection to this purely insurrectional attitude is that, as a result of its endless iteration during the past century and more, it has come to savor too strongly of what has been called "the humdrum of revolt." A more serious objection to the attitude is that it encourages an unrestricted and merely temperamental liberty which, paradoxically enough at first sight, affords the modern man no avenue of escape from the web that is being woven about him by the scientific determinist.

Realists of the current type are in point of fact intimately allied with the psychologists,—glandular, behavioristic, and psychoanalytical,—who, whatever their divergences among themselves, unite in their deterministic trend and therefore

clash fundamentally with both religious and humanistic realists. The proper method of procedure in defending the freedom of the will would seem to be to insist upon it as a fact of experience, a fact so primary that the position of the determinist involves an evasion of one of the immediate data of consciousness in favor of a metaphysical dream. What is genuinely experimental in naturalistic psychology should of course be received with respect; but the facts of which it takes account in its experiments are unimportant compared with the facts it either neglects or denies. Practically it is running into grotesque extremes of pseudo-science that make of it a shining mark for the Socratic critic.

Here at all events is the issue on which all other issues finally hinge; for until the question of moral freedom—the question whether man is a responsible agent or only the plaything of his impulses and impressions—is decided, nothing is decided; and to decide the question under existing circumstances calls for the keenest critical discrimination. Creation that is not sufficiently supported by such discrimination is likely to prove premature.

One may illustrate from Mr. Dreiser's *American Tragedy*, hailed in certain quarters as the "Mt. Everest" of recent fiction. He has succeeded in producing in this work something genuinely harrowing; but one is harrowed to no purpose. One has in more than full measure the tragic qualm but without the final relief and enlargement of spirit that true tragedy succeeds somehow in giving, and that without resort to explicit moralizing. It is hardly worth while to struggle through eight hundred and more very pedestrian pages to be left at the end with a feeling of sheer oppression. The explanation of this oppression is that Mr. Dreiser does not rise sufficiently above the level of "rearranging chemisms," in other words, of animal behavior. Tragedy may admit fate—Greek tragedy admits it—but not of the naturalistic variety. Confusion on this point may compromise in the long run the reputation of writers more eminent than Mr. Dreiser—for example, of Thomas Hardy. Fatalism of

the naturalistic type is responsible in large measure for the atmosphere of futility and frustration that hangs heavily over so much contemporary writing. One finally comes to feel with a recent poet that "dust" is the common source from which

stream
The cricket's cry and Dante's dream.

Anyone who admits reality only in what derives from the dust, whether in a cricket or a Dante, must, from the point of view of the religious or the humanistic realist, be prepared to make substantial sacrifices. In the first place, he must sacrifice the depth and subtlety that arise from the recognition in some form of the duality of man's nature. For the interest that may arise from the portrayal of the conflict between a law of the spirit and a law of the members, the inordinate interest in sex for its own sake promoted by most of the so-called realists is a rather shabby substitute. A merely naturalistic realism also involves the sacrifice of beauty in almost any sense of that elusive term. Closely related to this sacrifice is the sacrifice of delicacy, elevation, and distinction. The very word realism has come to connote the opposite of these qualities. When we learn, for example, that someone has written a realistic study of a great man, we are sure in advance that he has devoted his main effort to proving that "Plutarch lied." The more the great man is reduced to the level of commonplace or worse, the more we feel he has been "humanized."

Mr. Sherwood Anderson has argued ingeniously that, in as much as we ourselves are crude, our literature, if it is not to be unreal and factitious, should be crude likewise. But the writer who hopes to achieve work of importance cannot afford to be too deeply immersed in the atmosphere of the special place and passing moment. Still less can he afford to make us feel, as writers like Mr. Anderson and Mr. Dreiser and Mr. Sinclair Lewis do, that, if there were any lack of vulgarity in what they are depicting, they would be capable of supplying the defect from their own abundance. More is involved here than mere

loss of distinction. We have come, indeed, to the supreme sacrifice that every writer must make who does not transcend a naturalistic realism. He must forego the hope of the enduring appeal—the hope that every writer worthy of his salt cherishes in some degree. In the absence of humanistic or religious standards, he is prone to confound the real with the welter of the actual, and so to miss what Dr. Johnson terms the "grandeur of generality."

Certain books in the current mode are so taken up with the evanescent surfaces of life that they will survive, if at all, not as literature but as sociological documents. The very language in which they are written will, in a generation or two, require a glossary. So far from imposing an orderly pattern on the raw material of experience, they rather emphasize the lack of pattern. The resulting effect, to borrow a phrase from the late Stephen Crane, who has had a marked influence on the recent movement, is that of a "cluttered incoherency." As an extreme example of the tendency one may cite *Manhattan Transfer* by John Dos Passos. In the name of reality, Mr. Dos Passos has perpetrated a literary nightmare. Such a work would seem to have slight value even as a sociological document; unless, indeed, one is prepared to admit that contemporary Manhattan is inhabited chiefly by epileptic Bohemians.

"It is as much a trade," says La Bruyère, "to make a book as it is to make a clock"; in short, literature is largely a matter of technique. The technique of *Manhattan Transfer* is as dubious as its underlying philosophy. Neither can be justified save on the assumption that the aim of art is to exaggerate the clutter and incoherency of the mundane spectacle instead of eliciting its deeper meaning. Technique counts for even more in poetry than in prose. It would be possible to base on technical grounds alone a valid protest against the present preposterous overestimate of Walt Whitman. Fundamental questions need, in these very untraditional days, to be critically elucidated with a view to right definition if the poet is not to lack technique or still worse, if he is not, like certain recent practitioners of free verse,

to be hagridden by a false technique. It evidently concerns both the form and substance of poetry, whether one define it with Aristotle as the portrayal of representative human action, or whether one define it with Mr. Carl Sandburg as a "mystic, sensuous mathematics of fire, smokestacks, waffles, pansies, people, and purple sunsets."

There is no doubt much in the America of to-day that suggests a jazzy impressionism. Still our naturalistic deliquescence has probably not gone so far as one might infer from poetry like that of Mr. Sandburg or fiction like that of Mr. Dos Passos. The public response to some of the realistic novels has been considerable: allowance must be made however for the *succès de scandale*, also for the skill attained by the modern publisher in the art of merchandising. The reputation of certain books one might mention may be regarded as a triumph of "creative" advertising. What has been created is a mirage of masterpieces where no masterpieces are. It is well also to remember in regard to some of the works that have been most discussed that, so far from being an authentic reflection of the American scene, they are rather a belated echo of certain European movements. For it is as certain that in our literary and artistic modes we follow Europe—usually at an interval of from five to forty years—as it is that we lead Europe in our bathtubs and sanitary plumbing. Any one who resided in Paris in the nineties and later in America, will, as I can testify from personal experience, have the sense of having lived through the same literary fads twice. Mr. Dreiser reminds one of Zola and his school. The technique of Mr. Dos Passos recalls that of the Goncourts. Our experimenters in free verse have followed in the wake not merely of Walt Whitman but of the French symbolists, and so on.

We shall presently begin to hear of certain new developments in French literature and critical thought that point, though indecisively as yet, to a radical departure from what has been the main current since the eighteenth century and in some respects since the Renaissance. It is well that we should become

familiar with the writers who reveal in different ways this latest trend,—notably with Maritain, Maurras, Lasserre, Seillière, and Benda; for they give evidence of a quality of cerebration that is rare in our own literati. At the same time we should not adopt with our usual docility the total outlook of any of these writers: for no one of them has worked out a point of view exactly adapted to our requirements. In general, it is not fitting that a great nation at the very height of its power should go on indefinitely trailing after Europe. It is time for us to initiate something of our own. This does not mean that we should proceed forthwith to inbreed our own "originality." It means almost the exact opposite. The most original thing one could do nowadays would be to question the whole theory of originality as mere temperamental overflow and self-expression that has prevailed from the "geniuses" of the eighteenth century down to one of our youthful and very minor bards who aspires to "spill his bright illimitable soul."

A genuinely critical survey would make manifest that the unsatisfactoriness of our creative effort is due to a lack of the standards that culture alone can supply. Our cultural crudity and insignificance can be traced in turn to the inadequacy of our education, especially our higher education. Mr. Mencken's attack on the "professors" is therefore largely justified; for if the professors were performing their function properly Mr. Mencken himself would not be possible. One must add in common justice that the professors themselves, or at least some of them, are becoming aware that all is not well with existing conditions. One could not ask anything more perspicacious than the following paragraph from a recent report of Committee G to the American Association of University Professors:

> American education has suffered from the domination, conscious or unconscious, direct or indirect, of political and sentimental, as well as educational, theories that are demonstrably false. If the views of some men are to prevail the intellectual life of the country is doomed; everybody except the sheer idiot is to go to college and pursue chiefly

sociology, nature study, child study, and community service—and we shall have a society unique only in its mediocrity, ignorance and vulgarity. It will not do to dismiss lightly even so extreme a view as this; it is too indicative. Such influences are very strong, their pressure is constant; and if education has largely failed in America it has been due primarily to them.

In short, as a result of the encroachments of an equalitarian democracy, the standards of our higher education have suffered in two distinct particulars: first, as regards the quality of students; second, as regards the quality of the studies these students pursue. The first of these evils is generally recognized. There is even some prospect of remedial measures. Certain institutions, Harvard, for example, without being as yet severely selective, are becoming more critical of the incompetent student. On the other hand, there seems to be less hope than ever of any righting of the second and more serious evil—the failure to distinguish qualitatively between studies. The main drift is still toward what one may term the blanket degree. (Dartmouth, for example, has just merged its bachelor of arts and bachelor of science.) Yet rather than blur certain distinctions it would have been better, one might suppose, to use up all the letters of the alphabet devising new degrees to meet the real or supposed educational needs of the modern man. To bestow the A.B. degree indiscriminately on a student for whom education has meant primarily a specialization in chemistry and on one for whom it has meant primarily an assimilation of the masterpieces of Greek literature is to empty it of any effective meaning. At the present rate, indeed, the time may come when the A.B. will not throw much more light on the cultural quality of its recipient than it would, if, as has been suggested, it were bestowed on every American child at birth.

It goes without saying that those who have been lowering and confusing educational standards have been profuse in their professions of "service." A critical examination, not merely of American education but of American life at the present time will almost necessarily hinge on this term. The attitude of the

Socratic critic toward it is not to be confounded with that of Mr. Mencken and the "hard-boiled" contingent. "When a gang of real estate agents," says Mr. Mencken, "bond salesmen, and automobile dealers gets together to sob for Service, it takes no Freudian to surmise that someone is about to be swindled." But if one entertain doubts about this current American gospel, why waste one's ammunition on any such small fry? Other and more exalted personages than the members of the Rotary Club at Zenith have, in Mr. Sinclair Lewis's elegant phrase, been "yipping for Service." If one is to deal with this idea of service Socratically, one needs to consider it in its relation to the two figures who have rightly been taken to be the most representative in our cultural background—Benjamin Franklin and Jonathan Edwards. Franklin's idea of service is already humanitarian. Edward's idea is still traditionally Christian—service not of man but of God. What Franklin stood for is flourishing prodigiously at the present moment, so much so that he may perhaps be defined in his chief line of influence as the great superrotarian. What Edwards stood for is, on the other hand, largely obsolete or survives only in the form of habits, which, lacking doctrinal support, are steadily declining along with the whole Puritan culture.

Intermediary types are possible. One may in one's character reflect the Puritan background and at the same time in one's idea of service derive rather from Franklin. Precisely that combination is found in the most influential of our recent educational leaders—the late President Eliot. A legitimate admiration for his personal qualities should not interfere with the keenest critical scrutiny of his views about education, for the two things stand in no necessary connection. Practically this means to scrutinize the humanitarian idealism that he probably did more than any other man of his generation to promote. In this respect most of the heads of our institutions of learning have been and still are understudies of President Eliot.

In an address on the occasion of his ninetieth birthday President Eliot warned his hearers against introspection, lest it di-

vert them from a whole-hearted devotion to service. Between this attitude and a religious or humanistic attitude there is a clash of first principles. Both humanism and religion require introspection as a prerequisite of the inner life and its appropriate activity. With the disappearance of this activity what is left is the outer activity of the utilitarian, and this leads straight to the one-sided cult of material efficiency and finally to the standardization that is, according to nearly all foreign critics and many of our own, a chief American danger. We cannot return to the introspection of the Puritan. We shudder at the theology an Edwards would impose as the condition of his "divine and supernatural light." Yet it does not follow, as I have already suggested, that we should reject the inner life itself along with this theology. One may recognize innumerable incidental advantages in the gospel of service and yet harbor an uneasy suspicion withal that in the passage from the older religion to the modern humanitarian dispensation something vital has disappeared, something of which neither the outer working of the utilitarian nor again the expansive sympathy of the sentimentalist can offer an equivalent.

The problem of the inner life is very much bound up with two other problems that are now pressing for solution in our higher education and have as yet found none: the problem of the specialist and the problem of leisure. The man of leisure is engaged in an inner and specifically human form of activity, a form that is, according to Aristotle, needful if he is to compass the end of ends—his own happiness. The question is whether one should consent like the specialist to forego this activity and to live partially and as a mere instrument for the attainment of some outer end—even though this end be the progress of humanity. We are beginning to hear a great deal nowadays about the "menace" of leisure. It has been estimated that with the perfecting of mechanical devices the man of the future will be able to satisfy his material wants by working not more than four hours a day. It is vain to anticipate that the rank and file will use this release from outer activity intelligently unless the

leaders, notably those in high academic station, show the way. The notion of true leisure is the ultimate source of the standards of any education that deserves to be called liberal. When even a few of our college and university presidents show that they are thinking to some purpose on the nature of leisure it will be time enough to talk of "America's coming of age."

As it is, our institutions of learning seem to be becoming more and more hotbeds of "idealism." Their failure, on the whole, to achieve standards as something quite distinct from ideals on the one hand, and standardization on the other, may prove a fact of sinister import for the future of American civilization. The warfare that is being waged at the present time by Mr. Sinclair Lewis and others against a standardized Philistinism continues in the main the protest that has been made for several generations past by the temperamentalists, hard or soft, against the mechanizing of life by the utilitarian. This protest has been, and is likely to continue to be, ineffectual. The fruitful opposite of the standardized Philistine is not the Bohemian, nor again the hard temperamentalist or superman, as Mr. Mencken conceives him, but the man of leisure. Leisure involves an inner effort with reference to standards that is opposed to the sheer expansion of temperament, as it is to every other form of sheer expression.

Perhaps a reason why the standards of the humanist are less popular in this country than the ideals of the humanitarian is that these standards set bounds to the acquisitive life; whereas it seems possible to combine a perfect idealism with an orgy of unrestricted commercialism. It is well for us to try to realize how we appear to others in this matter. Our growing unpopularity abroad is due no doubt in part to envy of our material success, but it also arises from the proneness of the rest of the world to judge us, not by the way we feel about ourselves, but by our actual performance. If we are in our own eyes a nation of idealists, we are, according to our most recent French critic, M. André Siegfried,[1] a "nation of Pharisees." The European,

[1] See his volume *Les États-Unis d'aujourd'hui* (1927) translated under the title *America Comes of Age*.

M. Siegfried would have us believe, still has a concern for the higher values of civilization, whereas the American is prepared to sacrifice these values ruthlessly to mass production and material efficiency.

It is easy to detect under this assumption the latest form of a "certain condescension in foreigners." The breakdown of cultural standards is European as well as American. It is not clear that M. Siegfried himself has an adequate notion of the form of effort that can alone serve as a counterpoise to the one-sided activity of the utilitarian. His assertion that Europe, appalled at the American excess of standardization, is inclined to turn from Henry Ford to Gandhi is more picturesque than convincing. At the same time his anatomy of our favorite ideal of service is not without interest. This ideal opposes no effective barrier to our expansiveness. An unchecked expansiveness on the national scale is always imperialistic. Among the ingredients of a possible American imperialism M. Siegfried enumerates the American's "great self-satisfaction, his rather brutal sense of his own interests, and *the consciousness, still more dangerous, of his 'duties' towards humanity.*" M. Siegfried admits however that our imperialism is likely to be of a new and subtle essence, not concerned primarily with territorial aggrandizement.

A proper discussion of Mr. Siegfried's position as well as of other issues I have been raising would transcend the limits of an article. My end has been accomplished if I have justified in some measure the statement with which I started as to the importance of cultivating a general critical intelligence. James Russell Lowell's dictum that before having an American literature we must have an American criticism was never truer than it is to-day. The obvious reply to those who call for more creation and less criticism is that one needs to be critical above all in examining what now passes for creation. A scrutiny of this kind would, I have tried to show, extend beyond the bounds of literature to various aspects of our national life and would converge finally on our higher education.

We cannot afford to accept as a substitute for this true criticism the self-expression of Mr. Mencken and his school, unless indeed we are to merit the comment that is, I am told, made on us by South Americans: "They are not a very serious people!" To be sure, the reader may reflect that I am myself a critic, or would-be critic. I can only express the hope that, in my magnifying of the critical function, I do not offer too close a parallel to the dancing-master in Molière who averred, it will be remembered, that "all the mistakes of men, the fatal reverses that fill the world's annals, the shortcomings of statesmen, and the blunders of great captains arise from not knowing how to dance."

OSWALD GARRISON VILLARD

Journalist, critic

Besides doing active work as reporter and editorial writer for leading Eastern newspapers, Mr. Villard has done "free lance" writing of political, historical, and literary interest. He is editor of *The New York Nation.*

He presents the point of view on the immigration problem opposing Mr. Fairchild's viewpoint in "Individualizing the Immigrant." As presented by a social worker and an eminent reporter, these two articles are of special interest as a study not only in points of argument, but in their presentation.

TYRANNIZING THE IMMIGRANT [1]

The proposal to register and finger-print all aliens in the United States is gaining ground because of the recent approval of it by some of the police chiefs of the country. They looked at it from the strictly police point-of-view; it would, they said, aid them in pursuing and controlling lawless aliens.

Now the simple fact is that registering aliens would mean the adoption for them of one of the most hateful police regulations of the Old World which went to its doom in 1914. Anyone who lived in pre-war Germany or Russia need not have it explained to him what this meant. It was synonymous with autocratic rule of what Americans used to consider the worst kind of government. It meant a prying into one's personal affairs, it meant a police control, which were utterly repugnant to free Americans,—something which could only be justified, if at all, by a national emergency. In contrast to it, the free movement of all classes of Americans seemed one of the priceless blessings of life in America.

To single out now all aliens for special police attention would be nothing less than a misfortune. We have, it is true, entirely changed our attitude toward foreign immigration in the last thirty years. For a hundred years they were our most prized imports,—yes, our most sought after. We not only welcomed them on arrival, we went to all quarters of the globe for them. We lured them over by organized propaganda. Railroads, steamship companies, states, and sections of our country (as late as 1900 there was an organized effort to get Southern Europeans to immigrate to the South) made every effort to bring in new blood from abroad. There were even immigration

[1] Reprinted from *The Forum*, March, 1926, by special permission of the author and publishers.

commissioners who sought to fill the vacant lands in the new Western States. Now, all that is changed. We no longer need them for that pioneer work which Americans could not or would not do (the Northern Pacific Railroad was built largely by Chinese labor, as the Panama Canal was by foreign Negro and some Asiatic labor), and in addition, now that the economic need for them is over and our vacant lands are largely settled, we have developed an attitude of suspicion and distrust. We no longer welcome immigrants; we have put up the bars not only against their physical numbers, but we have laws against their opinions and states of mind. Our prevailing sentiment was recently voiced by Secretary Kellogg when he declared that the alien had no natural right whatever even to visit this country for a short trip and that the State Department would continue arbitrarily to decide to which of the applicants for entry it would graciously extend permission to step upon our soil.

It will, therefore, be but going a step further if we should take the attitude that every arrival in America is a suspect as a possible, or probable, criminal or Bolshevist, and must, therefore, be finger-printed and registered, and then we could go beyond that and round up all living aliens who have not taken out citizenship papers, and make them realize that they are a class apart. Whether living on remote farms or ranches, or in the worst city slums in which we seek to mold them into good Americans, they are to report to the police once a month or oftener, as do the registered prostitutes in many of the countries from which they have come. A medical examination, like that given to the aforesaid prostitutes, would follow as a matter of course,—must we not protect ourselves from contaminating foreign diseases?

To control and hasten the Americanization of the aliens is to be still another purpose of the registration. We have lost faith in the melting pot, despite the fact that we have so severely restricted immigration by the quota system. In effect, we should say to new arrivals: "We did not want you and only suffer your

presence. Now learn quickly these things we give you to learn and conform not only to our habits and modes of life but *think* and believe as we do, and, above all, you are to be absolutely content with our social conditions and our form of government which you must acknowledge to be the best in the world." That this has nothing in common with the historic American ideals of free speech and thought, free movement, and free life, does not deter the registrationists. They voice the new attitude that we who are here are in control, and anybody else must do as we say or "go back where he came from." "If he doesn't like it here, he can go home, bad cess to him." Such a plan, besides making the immigrant feel cheerful, happy, and at home, will undoubtedly hasten his applying for citizenship in order to escape such restrictions and control. Will he then, by the magic granting of his papers by some judge in a Federal court, be not only freed from police supervision, but be overnight changed from a liability to an asset? Does the sudden granting of citizenship papers really certify that the recipient thinks as he ought to, that he is safe, sound, respectable, and, like all native-born Americans, free from all criminal impulses and a model for all mankind? Would it not be really better to put up our fences altogether and exclude all aliens precisely as we seek to exclude all, or as many of their home-made goods as possible? Since a traveling Ramsay MacDonald, Arthur Henderson, Saklatvala, or Count Karolyi may leave behind him ideas that are pernicious in the eyes of the State Department, why not be done with aliens altogether and bar them entirely from our sacred soil, just as many Chinese now wish to bar all foreign devils from the Celestial Empire?

By all means, however, let us never show any regard whatever for the feelings of aliens. That is the best possible way to teach them that we own America, that we are their superiors, and that they are not welcome. I recall with pride the case of a distinguished British painter who, with his legally wedded wife, arrived in America to exhibit his paintings which have won him fame in England and on the Continent. It had stupidly never

occurred to him to bring along his wedding certificate,—all Americans always travel with their marriage certificates,—and so he was held up by the immigration officials who asserted that he was traveling with a courtesan, and they delayed his landing and nearly sent him to Ellis Island before he was able to get friends to identify his wife and certify to their character. Then he had the bad English taste to bring over some striking nudes among his paintings, and the customs officials held these up for days until he decided not to exhibit some of them. Of course, it's not our Government's fault that this man calls America a land of barbarians. It *must* protect our morals. What it should have done was to register him and his wife at once. Rich and poor, famous and unknown, must be treated alike, and as we cannot take any man's word as to the time he will stay, every alien must be registered whether he comes for a week or a year. There can surely be no better way to add to our well-known popularity abroad.

As for the practical side of registration, there are those who say it will take a small army of officials to check up the registered and see that they report regularly. To this the reply is that that will be the duty of local police officials. Have we not complete and most satisfactory coöperation between Federal and State authorities in the enforcement of the prohibition laws? Are the local police not invariably skilled, tactful, and able to control "Dagoes" and "Wops"? As for supervision of entry it was announced a few months back that the Government was going to move horse, foot, and dragoons against the smugglers who are "bootlegging" thousands upon thousands of foreigners into the United States,—over the Canadian line and the Rio Grande, and by ship from Cuba and elsewhere. That drive has not materialized, but this need not hinder the demand for alien registration. In our large cities we can catch these people by occasional roundups without warrants precisely as we do the Chinese. Who cares if we add some more thousands to our ever-growing army of spies and officials? Let those who will declare that this will only increase bootlegging in humans and

add another unenforceable law. The patrioteers behind registration will not be discouraged by such pro-foreign propaganda, or by the theory that stricter control of individuals will drive the circulation of unpopular ideas and political theories underground,—only foreign-born, it must never be forgotten, are the ones who hold to heretical ideas.

Of course there will continue to be old-fashioned Americans who believe in the mission of America to be an asylum for political refugees and for the aspiring of a war-wrecked world. They will continue to recall the millions upon millions, ignorant, unlettered, dirty and poor, who have come to our shores in good faith and have rendered services of inestimable value in peace and war, who have helped in our West, who have done yeomen's tasks on farms and in factories, who make all our clothes to-day, and who do the most exhausting labor in iron and steel mills that Americans will not touch at any price. These old-fashioned Americans insist that the percentage of the Old World immigrants who go wrong is not greater than before, that only a handful of them have subversive ideas, and that there is no reason to mistrust the faith of Jefferson and Wendell Phillips, and the rest of the great Americans, who declare that every man with an idea ought to be allowed to talk it in public even to the extent of preaching revolution. For such conservatives as these, —and they are the real American conservatives if by that we mean men and women who cling to old-fashioned American ideals,—there exists an enormous debt of gratitude and an enormous responsibility toward the newcomers. They feel that what foreigners have done to make America great alone binds us in honor to receive with friendship, respect, good-will, and mutual regard the immigrants who come to us, to treat them not as suspects and potential enemies, but as friends engaged in the greatest adventure possible,—the taking root in a strange clime,—which in ninety-nine cases out of every hundred results in great good to the United States. They who feel this way do not wish to register aliens save in the good-will and helpfulness of all Americans.

HENRY PRATT FAIRCHILD

Essayist, critic

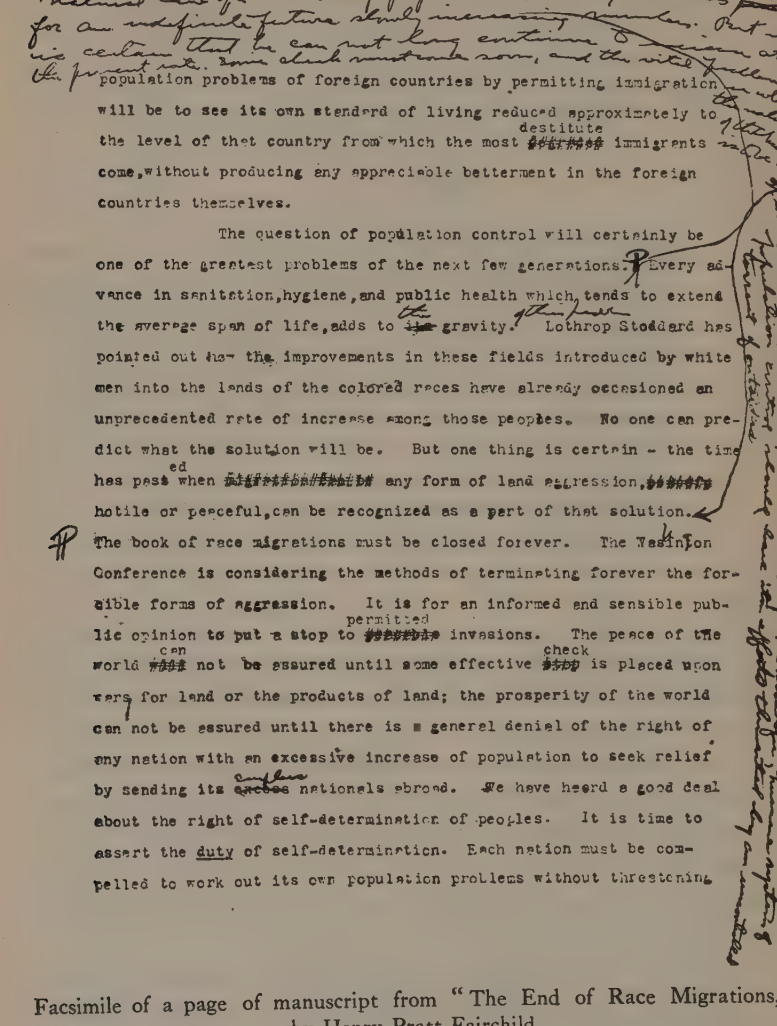
Mr. Fairchild has had a noteworthy career as an active worker in social service and as a professor of sociology in leading universities of the East and West. Since 1924, he has been a professor of sociology in New York University. The problem of immigration has been one of the questions in which he has been most interested and about which he has written most eloquently.

The opposing viewpoint of this article may be found in Mr. Villard's "Tyrannizing the Immigrant."

Mr. Fairchild has contributed a page of manuscript, a facsimile of which is reproduced on a following page.

"I will say that such a page is not characteristic of my method of writing. As a rule my manuscripts show relatively little correction.

"My conception of an adequate grasp of the English language is one that will enable a writer to word a paragraph just about as it ought to be the first time it is put on paper. I do all my composition directly on the typewriter and it is very seldom that I make a second draft of any manuscript. I try to know what I want to say before I put it down. When I am working on a piece of writing my mind keeps busy on it during my spare moments. While I am riding on the train, or even the subway, pottering about the garden, or sometimes (a bad practice) waiting



population problems of foreign countries by permitting immigration will be to see its own standard of living reduced approximately to the level of that country from which the most destitute immigrants come, without producing any appreciable betterment in the foreign countries themselves.

The question of population control will certainly be one of the greatest problems of the next few generations. Every advance in sanitation, hygiene, and public health which tends to extend the average span of life, adds to the gravity. Lothrop Stoddard has pointed out how the improvements in these fields introduced by white men into the lands of the colored races have already occasioned an unprecedented rate of increase among those peoples. No one can predict what the solution will be. But one thing is certain - the time has passed when any form of land aggression, hostile or peaceful, can be recognized as a part of that solution. The book of race migrations must be closed forever. The Washington Conference is considering the methods of terminating forever the forcible forms of aggression. It is for an informed and sensible public opinion to put a stop to permitted invasions. The peace of the world can not be assured until some effective check is placed upon wars for land or the products of land; the prosperity of the world can not be assured until there is a general denial of the right of any nation with an excessive increase of population to seek relief by sending its emigrant nationals abroad. We have heard a good deal about the right of self-determination of peoples. It is time to assert the duty of self-determination. Each nation must be compelled to work out its own population problems without threatening

Facsimile of a page of manuscript from "The End of Race Migrations," by Henry Pratt Fairchild.

to go to sleep at night I will be revolving the phraseology of various vital paragraphs. And when I am actually writing, I try to get each sentence right before touching my fingers to the keys.

"This habit of mine dates from the time when I was writing my doctor's thesis. After finishing several pages of the first draft it suddenly dawned on me that I was writing it almost exactly as I would write it in the end. So I proceeded to take a little more care and pains, and eventually turned in the original manuscript to the committee: it was later published, virtually without change, as "Greek Immigration to the United States." Of course in this case I had all my material very carefully compiled and classified before I began to write at all.

"This does not mean that I do not ordinarily go over my manuscripts many times—quite the contrary. I customarily read them repeatedly, and verbal changes are quite frequent; but they usually stand in final form essentially the same in all their main features as when first put in black and white.

"Now I confess that I have a very guilty feeling about this practice. I am painfully conscious that my productions are susceptible of great improvement, but it seems to be beyond my capacity to better them, except in details, once they have been written.

"While I am in the business of confessing, I suppose I ought to add—this is terribly heterodox—that I almost never make an outline of a particular piece of writing.

"My theory of writing, so far as I have one, is that if a person has his material well in hand, *and if he knows English*, he will be able to write well the first time—or speak well, for that matter. I am sometimes astounded at the

travail that supposedly intelligent business and professional men experience in dictating a letter. But whether it is writing, public speaking, correspondence, or personal conversation that one is interested in, a mastery of English is the *sine qua non*."

—Henry Pratt Fairchild.

INDIVIDUALIZING THE IMMIGRANT [1]

Not long ago I received a night letter from a friend of mine, a professor in a mid-Western college of high standing, telling me that a cousin of his, a woman of education and refinement, was being detained at Ellis Island and was in danger of being debarred. I got in touch with the officials on the Island, who received my inquiries with the efficiency and courtesy that are habitual with them, in spite of frequent allegations to the contrary. It appeared that the cousin had come to this country with the intention of having a six months' visit with her husband, who was engaged in business here. Before she could be admitted in conformity with the law and regulations it was necessary to have in evidence an affidavit showing that the husband was in the country legally. Here was the rub. The husband was on the Pacific coast and upon being advised of the situation wired back that it was impossible to get the affidavit there and suggested that perhaps my academic friend could give it! In the course of time the affidavit was produced,—from where, I do not know—and the traveler was released. As near as I can judge from the correspondence, she was on the Island close to two months, with what distress of mind and possibly of body,—made endurable, my friend says, only by a good sense of humor,—the reader is free to imagine.

If the system of alien registration proposed in bills now before Congress had been in operation this painful episode need never have occurred. The husband's status would have been a matter of record, ascertainable in a minimum time.

This is only one of numerous cases that go to show that those who regard the registration proposal as a device for perse-

[1] Reprinted from *The Forum*, March, 1926, by special permission of the publishers.

cuting the immigrant have misinterpreted the case. It is true that such a system is needed for the protection of the immigrant. What the foreigner needs in this country is identity. It is partly for this that he has come here. He needs a social and economic identity, but before these, and as a basis for these, he needs a legal identity. Too large a part of the troubles of the immigrant,—there are many, as one can learn by reading Miss Claghorn's illuminating book, *The Immigrant's Day in Court*,—is due to the fact that he is just a part of an undifferentiated mass, referred to even by some Americanization leaders themselves as "these people." In many types of legal complications the first step toward justice is to establish definitely the alien's standing in this country. This involves numerous details of which no record is available, and many of which,—as for instance, the name of the vessel on which he arrived,—the alien himself may have forgotten. It is a striking anomaly that those who are keenest against registration are likely to be of the same group that decries assimilation as the "standardization of the immigrant."

No doubt the prime purpose of registration is to differentiate between the alien who is legally in this country and the alien who is here in defiance of law. It is easy to see that this will work to the good of both the guiltless immigrant and the country. As for the fraudulent immigrant, he needs no consideration except that required by justice. It is not so easy, perhaps, for those not in immediate touch with immigration affairs, to realize how large and how varied are the problems created by the illegal immigrant, and how constant the vigilance required to keep the law from being reduced to a mockery by wholesale violations.

The immigration law of the United States is perhaps the most important body of legislation ever passed by any human agency, judging importance by the number of people and the gravity of the interests affected. The ordinary law restrains only an abnormal minority in their habitual behavior, or the majority in their occasional lapses into abnormal conduct. But here is a

law that affects innumerable millions of individuals with respect to their fundamental life activities. It determines, by prohibition, where they shall live, what occupations they shall follow, to what states they shall owe allegiance, where their children shall be born and brought up. At the close of the war period, when temporary restrictive legislation was first put into effect, it was estimated by competent observers that the potential emigration from Europe to the United States was limited only by the carrying capacity of the Atlantic vessels, at that time reckoned at about one and one-half million a year. As this capacity would have been rapidly increased to meet the demand, it is safe to say that at the present time the American immigration law directly affects the destiny of at least three million persons a year, and will continue to do so for an indefinite future.

In direct proportion to the importance of this law is the strain to which it is subjected. It is a huge dike thrown directly across one of the greatest currents of human activity that the world has ever known. The population problem of the world is becoming daily more unified. Population is a tremendous expansive force, constantly under pressure, constantly seeking to escape. But the pressure is very different in different areas. The world may be thought of as a large number of containers, in contact with each other. In some of these containers the pressure is over 600 to the square mile,—Belgium, 636; England and Wales, 649. Others are between 300 and 600,—Germany, 328; Italy, 329; Netherlands, 554. At the other extreme are Iceland, 2.4 and Mongolia, 1.5. In some very small areas the figures mount to 1000 or more,—Bermudas, 1043; settled area of Egypt, 1061. Of course the effective pressure is by no means exactly proportional to the density per square mile; factors of climate, soil, and the economic culture have to be taken into account. But for the important countries of the world, particularly in the temperate zones, these figures convey a useful approximate impression of the actual pressure.

Now in the midst of all these containers, and (from the point

of view of the possibility of movement) in contact with them all, is one great container where all the factors are most favorable and yet the pressure is only 35.5 per square mile. This is the United States. Here there exists a partial vacuum which, previous to the World War, was being rapidly counteracted by the stupendous flow of a million or more immigrants a year. Now we have undertaken to maintain this vacuum for an indefinite future. To preserve this inequality of pressure we have set up an artificial retaining wall,—the immigration law. How inevitably and relentlessly every crevice and leaky joint in that wall will be sought out by the force of world population!

Furthermore, it must be remembered that not one of the would-be immigrants whose ambitions are thwarted by this law owes allegiance to the power that passed it. It is not their law. More than this, many of them sincerely believe that a restrictive immigration law has no foundation in ethics or international right. In view of the ease with which many a vociferously patriotic American can reconcile his conscience with smuggling a few hundreds of dollars worth of foreign bargains past the boundaries of his own country, is it surprising that the alien should find no insuperable moral scruples in the way of his getting into this land of opportunity by whatever device may prove effective? If those who raise the hue and cry about "bribery on Ellis Island" had any conception of the vast sums available to pry the gate open a crack they would be better able to understand, if they did not condone, an occasional lapse on the part of an immigrant inspector whose salary would not tempt a good shoe clerk.

The first purpose of a registration system, accordingly, is to put some additional teeth into the restrictive law by adding effectiveness to the deportation provisions, which, in their turn, are likely to be made even more drastic in the near future. There are two great leaks in the immigration dike. One is over our land borders,—Canada and Mexico,—the other is through ocean shipping touching our ports. As to the total volume of illegal entry through these and other channels, a reliable esti-

mate is obviously, in the nature of the case, impossible. Perhaps the upper extreme is suggested by the figure of Secretary Davis, 850,000 for a year. Others would put it very much lower. In any case, the number is large enough to constitute a serious weakness in our restrictive system and a grave menace to the country. Fortunately this situation has been greatly improved within the past year through the increased effectiveness of the Immigration Border Patrol. Competent authorities estimate that within that period illegal entries over the Mexican border have been reduced two-thirds, and corresponding results achieved along the Canadian border and in Florida.

The second great leakage is composed of deserting alien seamen. This is a problem that has taxed the resources of both the lawmakers and the administrative officials for many years. It is one of the most difficult gaps to stop up effectively, and in spite of the elaborate provisions in the law, tens of thousands of aliens have secured entry into the country annually in this way, often with the connivance of the transportation companies. Here too, improvement is being made. The number of illegal entrants of this type, which in the fiscal year 1924 reached thirty-five thousand, was reduced in the following year to about nineteen thousand. But even this is a very excessive number, especially in comparison with a total legal quota for the entire Eastern Hemisphere of only about one hundred and sixty-one thousand. A worker in a water-side social agency in one of our great ports remarked recently, "If the immigration officials would come around to see me I could turn over fifty or sixty deserting seamen at any time."

The "bootlegged immigrant" alone would constitute an ample justification for a registration system. However, there are in fact numerous other provisions of the law the enforcement of which would be greatly facilitated, often to the distinct advantage of the alien, if such a system were in force, for instance those referring to aliens visiting the United States temporarily, aliens in transit, aliens returning from a temporary visit abroad, students, and so forth. There are also various other relation-

ships in which the plan would be of much value. It would stimulate and help social agencies of various kinds to lighten their burdens by taking advantage of the deportation provisions of the law. This also applies to Government officials. As things are now, the trouble and expense of proving that a given alien is deportable are often prohibitive. It would be of inestimable value in all constructive Americanization programs. It would be of great statistical or demographic utility. It would relieve the naturalization courts, and at the same time increase the efficiency of their work.

What, then, are the objections to a proposal that has so much in its favor? Most of them, upon examination, like almost all objections to any form of immigration control, are found to be based upon some assumptions as to natural rights or liberties. It is hardly necessary to point out that all such objections, and all such assumptions, lie outside the realm of argument, and can therefore be brushed aside. It is, however, perhaps pertinent to point out that in this matter excellent precedent is furnished by foreign countries. One need not be twenty-four hours in England, or France, or Germany, or Poland, or I know not what European country to find out that if he is a foreigner, he is under very strict regulations as to registration. In England, if reports are correct, every time the alien changes his residence he is required to register.

"All of which is not to the point," the objector will say. "We established this nation to escape from all such tyrannies. The scheme is fundamentally un-American." Volumes could be written on the use of the term "un-American" in opposition to progressive measures in the history of this country, all the way from the introduction of a professional police force in cities to the "penalty clause" in the charter of the farmers' coöperative elevators. It is, indeed, a term to conjure with. And yet, in the light of calm thought, it is either entirely meaningless when applied to a measure rather than a principle, or else it indicates that if we are to remain American we must accept only that which always has been, resigning ourselves to a completely

static existence regardless of time or change. Nevertheless, it is passing strange that the registration of aliens should be called un-American when it is remembered that our own citizens, native-born and naturalized, if they wish to exercise the right of suffrage must register and keep registered.

However, so great is the weight of this sentiment that Representative Johnson is ready to try a compromise by which, for a trial period, registration shall be voluntary, with inducements in the way of special exemptions for the immigrant relatives of registrants.

More tangible objections are that the system would be too expensive for the immigrant, and too cumbersome for the country. As to the first of these, it need only be said that the charge need not be high, and that since the average immigrant comes here primarily because he can make more money, he should not object to paying a few dollars of his extra income for the privilege. As to administration, Mr. Johnson proposes the very shrewd scheme of entrusting this to the Post Office Department, and using the fees to help cover the recent increases in postal salaries.

But the outstanding objection to registration is furnished by the bogey of espionage. It is asserted that such a measure would in practice become a device for prying into the personal affairs of aliens, spying upon their meetings, and hounding them on every hand. As for this possibility, I for one would be inclined to say, if we can have any more flagrantly arbitrary and tyrannical espionage with registration than we had in 1919 and 1920 without registration, in the name of humanity let's have it, and see if it will help us to find out what is wrong with our government. But after all, isn't it a peculiar conception of our American Government that so distrusts its officials that it would withhold from them a useful power for fear that it might be abused? Could the reddest radical who might be caught in the net of registration promulgate a more "subversive" doctrine than this?

In our zeal for justice and tolerance we have been too prone

to ignore the legitimate distinction between the rights and privileges of aliens and those of citizens. This, incidentally, may account for the notable indifference to American citizenship manifested by a large proportion of our aliens. Thus, with respect to registration, it is often argued that if we are to register anybody we should register everybody, citizens and aliens alike. As for that, we do register everybody every ten years, yet I do not recall having heard anybody advocate the abolishment of our census system on account of its inherent menace of espionage. But the important question is, why must we feel that we can deny no rights to the alien which are granted to the citizen, that we can impose upon him no obligations that are not common to all? Because we permit the citizen to vote, must we also permit the alien to vote? We have done so often in the past, but we are steadily abandoning the practice. Because public office is open to the citizen, must it also be open to the alien? Because a native-born citizen may become President, must that possibility be extended to the naturalized citizen? The fact is that the alien is here on sufferance, and occupies a special status. If the nature of this status involves imposing upon him forms of control that are not extended to citizens there is no injustice, nor any violation of the principles of democracy or liberalism.

President Coolidge, in his December message to Congress, made the following lucid statement of the case: "While our country numbers among its best citizens many of those of foreign birth, yet those who now enter in violation of our laws by that very act thereby place themselves in a class of undesirables. If investigation reveals that any considerable number are coming here in defiance of our immigration restrictions, it will undoubtedly create the necessity for the registration of all aliens. We ought to have no prejudice against an alien because he is an alien."

Neither ought we to have any prejudice in favor of an alien because he is an alien. The situation described by the President undeniably exists. Hundreds of thousands of aliens are now in

the country illegally, and tens of thousands more are likely to come annually in the future. Beyond doubt they are responsible for a very disproportionate share of the various evils indiscriminately laid at the door of an undifferentiated immigrant population. It is a false humanitarianism that would deny to the law-abiding and self-respecting alien a degree of individualization that would free him from the odium now heaped upon his class as a whole.

ON BOOKS, AUTHORS, AND LITERARY PROBLEMS:

STANLEY T. WILLIAMS

Critic

Interest in the history of American letters has been a comparatively recent thing. Mr. Williams has made it his special concern, teaching it and writing about it at Yale University. He is now recognized as a scholar and authority on Washington Irving. Emerson and Hawthorne have been other particular studies for him. He contributes to periodicals now and then critical articles about the moderns. This analysis of *Elmer Gantry* won the *Forum* prize as the best criticism of Sinclair Lewis's novel when that book was widely discussed in 1927.

Mr. Williams has also made studies of classical English literature, having written and edited many texts.

REVIEW OF ELMER GANTRY [1]

No book published in 1927 created such a sensation when it appeared as Sinclair Lewis's *Elmer Gantry*. The Editor of *The Forum* offered a prize of one hundred dollars for the review of the book which best appraised its permanent literary and artistic value, and the prize went to Professor Stanley T. Williams of Yale for his review which originally appeared in the Literary Supplement of the *Yale News* on March 16, 1927. Two other reviews tied for honorable mention in this contest, those by Rebecca West in the *New York Herald Tribune Books*, March 13, 1927, and by Michael Williams in *The Commonweal*, March 30, 1927. *The Forum*.

Here is *Elmer Gantry*, "the eagerly awaited 'preacher novel' by Sinclair Lewis." This is what the envelope says, and there is evidence enough in recent morning papers that publishers and booksellers have anticipated its advent: there are columns of quotations from clergymen; and huge blackface advertisements. From the book itself falls a slip, warning the reader of its controversial nature. Skillful publicity has made us a little shocked before we read *Elmer Gantry*. "Lewis has disposed of the business man and the physician! Now he is going to attack the Church!" So remarked a student of mine, and I settled down in my chair to hear the indictment, mildly apprehensive.

Instead of that I found myself reading cheap comedy. In spite of its blasphemy, its profanity, its pointless relish for dirt, *Elmer Gantry* as a novel is essentially comic, that is, the issues it raises are so interwoven with exaggeration and partisanship, so free from any judicial consideration of the questions before the novelist, that no one is bound to answer them seriously. This is evident if we think of the story or of the central character, Elmer Gantry. The story concerns the conversion at a small western college to the Baptist faith of Elmer Gantry, a popular athlete with a small brain and large, fluid emotions. On this occasion, as on many others in the book, Gantry is

[1] Reprinted from *The Forum* by permission of the author and publishers.

drunk. Then follow grotesque scenes in a theological seminary, where Gantry is trained for the ministry, and many sordid episodes, as he simultaneously acts the hypocrite in the pulpit. This part of the narrative ends with his expulsion from the church.

In his exciting account of the two professional evangelists swaying huge audiences, reaping vast fortunes, spellbinding, deceiving, acting the charlatan, is presumably the nub of the book. Certainly there is brilliant writing here. But again as a book of controversy, it does not lift me in indignation from my chair. It is a sickening recital, but requires no answer. And I suspect that the reason the story does not make me wish to argue is not that I am a victim of all the faults which Mr. Lewis ascribes to the academic mind, but merely that even this part of the plot is farce. It is overdone. It is stagey. It is unreal, utterly unconvincing. The foul lives of these two spiritual cheats permit no generalizations. The entire adventure of Elmer Gantry with Sharon Falconer is blasphemous, shocking even to a casual reader, and, like the entire novel, in execrable taste, but the very fact that the novel is so noisily deliberate, so boisterously insulting removes it from the realm of serious controversy into that of cheap publicity.

To regard Sinclair Lewis not as a thoughtful, if rather sardonic, critic of American life, but as an intellectual prize fighter, ready, to use his own phrases, to fight any given opponent in any given saloon—this is the effect of reading the story of *Elmer Gantry* after those of *Main Street* and *Arrowsmith*. Mr. Lewis is so angry that he is almost hysterical. As he proceeds with Gantry's identification with the various types of "hokum" among Christian Scientists, Methodists, and other sects, he becomes a windy and very silly Jeremiah. Finally he depicts the minister's unscrupulous career until, in a concluding scene of chicanery, Gantry bids us farewell. He has just been accused and rather doubtfully cleared—he *is*, of course, guilty—of a base charge. Waiting in his study for the church to fill, he is anxious. How will his congregation receive him?

"Feebly the Reverend Dr. Gantry wavered through the door

of the auditorium and exposed himself to twenty-five hundred question marks. They rose and cheered—cheered—cheered. Theirs were the shining faces of friends. . . . 'Oh, my friends!' cried Elmer. 'Do you believe in my innocence, in the fiendishness of my accusers? Reassure me with a hallelujah!' The church thundered with a triumphant hallelujah, and in a sacred silence Elmer prayed: . . . He turned to include the choir, and for the first time he saw there a new singer, with whom he would certainly have to become well acquainted. But the thought was so swift that it did not interrupt the pæan of his prayer: 'Let me count this day, Lord, as the beginning of a new and more vigorous life, as the beginning of a crusade for complete morality and the domination of the Christian church through all the land. Dear Lord, thy work is but begun! We shall yet make these United States a moral nation.'"

With this sneer the story of Elmer Gantry ends. The worst of the matter is that such scenes, of which the reviewer's specimen is exceedingly mild, will probably excite serious debate. They should, of course, be regarded as outside the consideration of those who have in charge the problems of the church. The most salutary reaction of this blatant book would be a deafening silence. *Elmer Gantry* is an undocumented social pamphlet, a "Shooting Niagara" for the American Church. But no Carlyle with faith in the meaning of life wrote *Elmer Gantry*.

Yet the followers of Mr. Lewis will say that this anger represents a very definite and prevailing state of mind in America about our culture. They will find in it merely the culmination of the repressed disgust implicit in *Main Street*. As one of them has said, it is time to be angry. I do not propose in a short review to investigate the justice of this feeling. I wish merely to say that our self-criticism which really began in the 1890's (in the sense that we know it to-day) has been most effective when it has been most honest, most factual, and least blasphemous. A student of American literature from 1890 to 1927 may point readily to sensational books which were strikingly like *Elmer Gantry*. To say that they are now forgotten is an

understatement. The same student may also discover other books on this eternal theme of our *Gemeinheit* which have crept into our consciousness. To trace the comparative influences upon our self-criticism—surely a very healthy condition of mind since the 1880's—of an *Elmer Gantry* with the work, say, of Edith Wharton, Willa Cather, or Stuart Sherman is impossible. Yet is it not likely that after this stick of dynamite has done its worst, we may again turn to them as depicters of the American Scene?

If, then, you put down your disgust, the book is merely comic, a falsetto lie. What, then, is left? Very little indeed that reminds us of the old Sinclair Lewis. No structure: the novel is a farrago of unrelated episodes, save that through them stalks Elmer Gantry, hypocrite, sensualist, sneak, schemer, thief. No detachment as in *Main Street*, no reserve; in fact, there is little that is reminiscent of the first remarkable novel. All artistic power is lost or forgotten in order to make a vituperative tract. There are just two things which carry us on through the mire: first, the sentences, those stinging lashes of the angry propagandist, whipping us through the book with hard humor, with cynicism, with cold, disillusioned satire. Second, there are traces of the old power in character portrayal. Yet for the study of character in the earlier novels Mr. Lewis has substituted caricature. This is especially true of Elmer, the unspeakable. He never existed, but by skillful writing he assumes the reality of a cartoon politician. So Sharon, when we first see her, betrays what Mr. Lewis can do with his pen when he is not angry. She belongs in another story. Other episodes hint, to be just, at sanity: the pathetic tale of Frank Shallard, or that of Jim Lefferts, who gives Gantry the Bob Ingersoll from which he preaches throughout his career. But this brings us again to the folly of the book, its absurdity.

Elmer Gantry is to those who believed in Mr. Lewis a disappointment. For many have thought of him as a writer endowed with genius who would aid as a thinker and an artist in American self-criticism. His defection from this position, in *Mantrap* and *Elmer Gantry*, is sudden and startling.

HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

Critic

Mr. Canby is the editor of *The Saturday Review of Literature*, and as such is interested in the work of his contemporary writers. He is the author of *Better Writing*, a textbook on the art of composition, and of *Definitions*, two volumes of critical essays and book reviews. Mr. Canby has taught at Yale University.

Bad writing may be due to a bad idea, or it may be due to a failure in expression that comes from bad thinking or bad English or both. If the idea is bad, nothing can be done except burn the manuscript and discourage the writer from inflicting more wandering words upon a society already written and talked to the point of distraction. If the English is defective, there are remedies, of which more later. But it is a safe guess that nine-tenths of the writing which honestly tries to be good and fails is spoiled in the fateful thinking between the birth of an idea and the setting down of the first word—in the moments of actual composition. Do not be deceived. Composition takes place before writing, even with those adepts who speak or write "without preparation." Their subconsciousness is ready if they are not. They have caught the first link of the chain of unwinding thought and feel what is to come even if they do not yet know, consciously, what they are to say. If they are not so prepared, the expected happens—what editor does not know the hastily written article that

changes from thought to padding halfway through, what audience is not familiar with the lecturer who relapses into wind and anecdote after the first fifteen minutes!

Every rhetoric treats—and many of them treat well—of this development of the idea which has so much to do with the success of that process by which good ideas are made communicable. The difficulty is that writers remember the directions in these books but fail to see the application of arid sets of rules to their living material.

I am desirous not to repeat from these books what logic requires of all who would unfold their minds, but rather to touch the actual moment of composition itself and show logic at work. And indeed it is impossible to begin or to end any discussion of writing with logic alone. This is where the textbook fails which takes a syllogism or an outline from the context of imagination and interest and exhibits it as a process that, abstracted from its element, is as unnatural as a dead trout on a sand bank.

Rather let us work by illustration, choosing a specific instance where logic and all else that helps to unfold an idea can be seen at work. I choose, because of the skill and flexibility involved, an editorial for a metropolitan paper, let us say an editorial on Prohibition, the theme of which has been determined in an editorial conference on a Tuesday noon, the editorial to be written by six of the same day.

The discussion in the conference of editorial writers ranged over the question as to whether Prohibition was justified by its fruits. The editor who took the assignment thought it was not, and the opposition to his opinion in the conference stirred his energies and quickened his mind. The idea which came to him as they talked was that nothing which happens to the present generation is of importance by comparison with what our children may find

waiting for them when they come of age, and he argued that they would find a new crime and abundant means of committing it. This was his idea. It was born in the midst of the discussion because of opinion and experience already present in his mind but never so definitely embodied.

The conference breaks up and he goes back to his office to write. At first he spins his mind about the subject. Logic, the application of reason, is his first servant. What *are* the fruits of Prohibition? How can they be weighed? If a new crime is worse than an old evil, how can that be demonstrated? In such a chain of argument what comes first, and what shall follow it? His mind is clear and reasonable or he would not be a professional writer of editorials, and, willy-nilly, no matter how passionately he is devoted to proving his point, he will analyze his subject, consider cause and effect, order and balance, pro and con.

A trained mind will complete its logicizing quickly; an untrained will often dodge the whole process and land in the dumps. But, short or long, no writing is safe without it. You must be sure of your grounds, clear as to your facts, reasonable in narrative or exposition or arguments. And yet the judicial mind is no guarantee of successful authorship. The best of reasoning will not assure the success of an editorial.

To return to the editor's office, imagination next begins to function, if indeed there is a "next" in so flashing a process as composition where, as in a sleight of hand, several operations may go on at once. Logic at the most merely shows what can and what cannot be done, not what is most expedient to do. The writer might analyze the fruits of Prohibition until the presses rusted without making an editorial, if logic only were at work.

In books on writing, imagination is discussed as something esoteric, possessed only by the great. Nonsense! There is not a step in elementary thinking where imagination does not guide. Imagination brings before the editorial writer pictures of possible attitudes. Imagination plays with possible beginnings and endings, selecting the best in the light of the effect one desires. It guides his thinking. Logic is the machine; imagination is the driver planning the course which he wants his car of thought to follow. If it cannot, if logic will not go that way, imagination must give way. In practice it does not by any means give way, and a good two-thirds of the political editorials which are inflicted upon a gullible public follow the warm imagination or the hidden desires of the writer, and let logic and truth go hang. Such writing is often skillful, but it is seldom in any sense good.

Next, intuition steps in. Intuition, which is only imagination in its sympathetic mood, warns the writer that cold logic will never persuade the Prohibitionist. It feels the mood of his audience and discards this excellent argument because of the prejudice it will arouse and chooses another because of associations favorable to the cause. Imagination and intuition have given him his strategy, logic has perfected his tactics. The preparation for this editorial campaign has taken perhaps fifteen minutes of concentrated thinking—*not* upon logic, imagination, rules, procedure, but upon the *subject*, with the editor's mind approaching it freely and by every method, concerned not with *how* he should think it out, but with thinking it out. Then, if he is a novice, he makes a plan, if he is a professional he jots down a note or two, or, without that, begins to write.

And thus in all writing, from a novel to a dictated

letter, factors, complex in analysis but simple in operation, play and interplay. Be illogical, fail to see the relation of cause and effect, be disorderly in thinking, and you pay the price in muddled plots or muddy letters. Suppress your imagination, and your whole effort is unguided; you lack point, you are dull. As for intuition—that, like a well-favored countenance, comes by fortune. Be happy if you possess it.

The simple truth is that any one intelligent enough to put together complicated sentences will exercise whatever imagination and logic he possesses if at the moment of composition he feels the necessity for clear and directed thinking, which means, if he has grasped warmly a good idea. No elaborate rhetorical methods of plan and syllogism will help the lazy-minded. An eager brain will speed in a minute of thinking through logical processes that would take, literally, hours to analyze. Thinking must be learned while thinking; imagination developed by an attempt to shape experience. The important advice for the writer is, that, having grasped his idea, he must at the moment of composition begin to unfold it by the best way he can find.

—Henry Seidel Canby in "Unfolding an Idea." [1]

[1] From *Better Writing*. Reprinted by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.

REVIEW OF SHERWOOD ANDERSON'S "MANY MARRIAGES" [1]

> So I saw in my Dream that the Man began to run; now he had not run far from his own door, but his Wife and children, perceiving it, began to cry after him to return: but the Man put his fingers in his Ears and ran on, crying Life, Life, Eternal Life: so he looked not behind him, but fled towards the middle of the plain.

Many Marriages is a new Pilgrim's Progress in which the pilgrim goes crying for "Life, Life," in a very different sense from that intended by Bunyan. As Christian, breaking out with a lamentable cry, "What shall I do?" renounced his daily occupation, his wife, and his friends, and rushed off upon spiritual adventures, so did the man named John Webster. Voices began to call within him, the burden of his daily experience weighs down upon his life, a "frenzy distemper," like Christian's, comes upon him, and then, even as Christian meets Evangelist, so he looks into the eyes of a woman, sees the spirit alive and vivid within her bodily house, and from that instant is a converted man. It is revealed to him that he has been moving in a world of locked doors, seeing only the walls of people's minds, acting dully, thinking others' thoughts, until his own flame was ready to flicker out. His wife has built a wall about herself, and within it she is little better than dead. His daughter, whose flame of life was scarcely lit, has already begun to lock doors upon it. And John Webster, to whom had come the vision of a world in which humanity's inmost thoughts and sympathies might pass within and without freely along lines of love, is determined to tear open the doors of those nearest him. With the aid of another he saves first himself, and then goes

[1] From *Definitions:* Second Series. Reprinted by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.

back for those who lived nearest him. His daughter he thinks he saves; but his wife he cannot release. It is she who has stifled him; her soul is dead.

This is the progress of the modern pilgrim from stagnation to eternal life, whose outward story is merely the old tale of a sated husband deserting his family for a new love. Sherwood Anderson, the writer of the story, is a mystic, even as John Bunyan is a mystic. He deals in symbols drawn from the familiar life of the Middle West, even as Bunyan dealt in symbols drawn from the familiar pages of the Bible. The wheel has seemingly turned full circle and brought the modern, with his instinct for sex psychology, back to the earnest "this you must do to be saved" of the great Puritans. For he of Bedford Gaol and he of Winesburg, Ohio, alike believe that only conversion can save us from the body of our living death.

However, the wheel of history never does come full circle, since it never touches again the point at which movement began. Both the incidents and the end of Anderson's story belong to a different world from that society, trembling under the fear of God, that John Bunyan knew. John Webster is an unheroic sinner in a trivial community, who goes on sprees to Chicago, and is even less sure than Christian of the possibility of salvation. He thinks (as Christian's friends thought of him) that he is a little insane; he thinks that perhaps this new light upon the world which transforms all experience is only a delusion which hides a rather vulgar desire to run away with his secretary to escape a frigid wife and an uninteresting business. And yet the world *is* transformed for him by the mere resolve to carry out this unheroic feat; not a house, not a man that seems to him the same as before he opened the door of his mind. In the fervor of his desire to teach others what he has learned, that nothing can be beautiful that is not loved, that without a free passing of love between minds and bodies there is no real living, he acts seeming insanity. He buys a picture of the Virgin, lights candles before it, strips off his clothes because they are the husk which seemed the real John Webster to his family, and

paces thus nightly in his room, knowing that sooner or later his wife and daughter must burst in and, seeing him distraught (as Christian seemed distraught), may be moved to hear and perhaps to understand his revelation. It happens. He talks to his daughter as man to woman, tells her the story of his own marriage tragedy, where suppression of physical love had killed the spirit within it, awakes her life through love, and leaves her with her prostrate mother (soon to die of poison) to go off with Natalie Swartz, who had given him new life, but may not herself suffice to keep him living. For that many marriages (not necessarily of the body) may be requisite.

It is a rather terrible story, sordid in some of its details, almost unbearably literal in more, shocking also, though the mystic fervor of the writer makes a charge of indecency irrelevant. And some of its incidents are comic without intention. Nevertheless, with Anderson, as with Tennyson and Emerson, cities, rivers, houses, streets are veils behind which reality moves. The tale of how in all purity and by accident John Webster met his wife as Adam met Eve, and how shame and lies denied the love that might have come of that meeting, is full of inner significance. More vitally different from Bunyan's prose epic is the vision, the faith, the end of this modern writer's book.

Indeed, the vision of Bunyan is a world away from the vision of Sherwood Anderson, although they are mystics both. The Puritan dreamer's soul was burdened with the need of salvation in a dream world to be gained through ardors, denials, courage, and altruism in this one. Flesh was an enemy. Love of wife, love of children, love of friends, were rivals to the love of God. His pilgrim sought to save himself that by his example all might be saved. His endeavor, selfish at first, was social finally. It embraced Everyman. Anderson knows no division between flesh and spirit that does not parch the one and kill the other. Like Bunyan, he is willing that his pilgrim shall save himself even if he kills his wife, disrupts his home, wrecks his business, and puts dangerous knowledge in the immature mind of his daughter. But it is not salvation elsewhere but life here that

he proposes, more life, more love, with the possibility of attaining a freedom of the mind by which loving heart meets loving heart and exchanges life currents unhampered by fear, convention, or false shame; failing that, the freedom of those devil-may-cares of history, the Tristans, whose carriage is upright because they have broken through convention and lived regardless of all but the feeling of life. Better the soul of a libertine, he says, than a soul of earth. Let the whole world die, if it may live again in glory, Bunyan chanted. Anderson would let society as it is go to the devil, but only if it cannot permit free flowering of love and life here and now. Our minds now die before their bodies. If a wife, dead already in mind and emotion, kills herself because her husband leaves her, what is the loss? If a man, escaping the fate of many marriages, finds renewal of youth in another love, who has suffered as much as he has gained? Both conceptions, the Christian and what, for convenience, we may call the pagan, are equally radical, equally removed from current practice. Bunyan's is the more fanatic, the more social, the nobler; Anderson's the more ruthless (he does not pity the lost), the more characteristic of the perplexities of modern experience. We have, in practice, given up the Puritan's program; before we accept the pagan's solution we shall ask for much more experience and much less vagary than is contained in this book. Without further attempt to pass judgment, let the contrast stand between them.

The reader must see from this description that *Many Marriages* is a remarkable book, although there is no intention here to compare it in excellence with such a masterpiece as *Pilgrim's Progress*. It is remarkable as mere story, if it is possible to consider the story alone in a book under which flows a broad stream of reverie and mystical interpretation. It is remarkable for its style, which is beautiful in its plainness. It is a style which perfectly reflects its subject and the questing, rather wistful mind of Anderson himself. But it is an uneven novel, disturbing in its incidents, disturbing in its implications, and if the fault is sometimes the reader's, who is not accustomed

to such plain speaking, such upflowings, as Anderson would say, from the well of hidden thinking, it is not always his weakness that is offended. There is a defect in taste in Anderson, that taste, whose other name is tact, which phrases the bald incident in harmony with the mind of the expected reader and makes precisely the impression intended, no more and no less. Some parts of this book will be called ugly names, which, as they came from the mind of the author, they emphatically did not deserve. Anderson has done what the anthropologists say man has always been doing, he has taken the facts of love and idealized them, he has taken sex for his theme and transcended sex as we have been accustomed to know it. But he has felt it needful to overemphasize brute fact as if, like his hero, it were necessary that he should go naked into company in order to prove that he is not a stuffed image, but essential man.

In spite of this shortcoming, Sherwood Anderson is feeling and thinking where most of our novelists are observing. He works like D. H. Lawrence in the intricacies of sex, but relates sex to life instead of immersing life in the sex instinct. He may become a greater artist, if not a better writer, provided that he finds his way from life to art. He will shock many of his readers for some time to come, probably until he has ceased to experiment with human nature in the attempt to find its complete explanation. Already his touch, which was heavy, grows lighter, and humor (but not in this book!) begins to correct an excess which came from too much brooding. If we are to have an American Hardy, he is the man.

PHILIP LITTELL

Essayist, critic

Mr. Littell is an experienced newspaper man. He was on the staff of the *Milwaukee Sentinel* for eleven years and the *New York Globe* from 1910–1913. Since 1914 he has conducted a column of reviews and literary criticism called "Books and Things" in *The New Republic*.

He has suggested his studies of Rossetti and Santayana as examples of his work.

Mr. Littell says:

"As a rule I don't correct, but rewrite and rewrite, again and again, painfully."

—PHILIP LITTELL.

THE POETRY OF ROSSETTI [1]

What did the literary critics have to say for themselves, apropos of Rossetti, when Rossetti was new? I am glad I asked myself that question. One of the minor annoyances of life is people's failure to ask the question which one fully intends to answer. And I have lately been looking, as it happens, through the pages of an old magazine or two.

Rossetti's second and last untranslated volume, completing *The House of Life*, was published in 1881. He died in April, 1882, in his fifty-fourth year. Writing just before his death, an Edinburgh Reviewer, anonymous, as all Edinburgh Reviewers were in those days, had this to say: "In spite of a good deal of mere musical beauty of language in many of the sonnets, we turn over most of them with an increasing sense of their intellectual barrenness and weakness, of the preponderance of mere sound over meaning, of the prevalence of an elaborate and cloying mannerism of words and metaphors, which seems not so much the expression of fullness of thought as the arrangement of elaborate drapery to hide the tenuity of meaning."

Inexcusably stupid? Stupid enough, in all conscience, but not I think quite inexcusably. Rossetti's diction must, at a first encounter, have called excessive attention to itself. It is studded with many of the first aids to writers of sonnets, with things like as when, even as, even I and she, lo! and so on; rubber stamps which even now may surprise us in Rossetti unless we remember that his picking and choosing fastidiousness consisted less in rejecting what too many mediocre poets had liked too well than in rejecting only what he himself disliked at first-hand. Besides, he enriched, as he thought, his diction by weaving into it a few archaic or rare words, such as dule, teen, malison, eu-

[1] Reprinted by permission from *The New Republic*, June 15, 1921.

phrasy—"stunning words for poetry," he calls these properties in a letter.

Shall we in our self-righteousness strike a censorious attitude as we read this luckless Edinburgh Reviewer? who after all, in so far as he mistook Rossetti's for costume poems, was only guilty of the same error that we all fall into, except the few of us who can see with our eyes, whenever we allow the firemen's uniform to keep us from distinguishing the individual Irishmen who wear it. Nothing is more characteristic of Rossetti's poems, long or short, than their design, their structure, the thoroughness of their "fundamental brainwork." Unhappy Edinburgh Reviewer, so self-confident, so unperceiving, seeing only the tapestry, missing so many of the strange new forms which the tapestry fitted so exactly! His mistake was mine, a few years ago, when first I arrived at a mountainous West Indian Island, where the greenery lying over all the landscape, the arras-weaving lianas hanging everywhere, muffling every cliff, blinded me for several days to Dominica's variety and steepness and essential bones.

Harder to forgive is another passage in the same Edinburgh article, where the reviewer gives vent to his amazement that the author of "Jenny" should treat, in *The House of Life*, "the subject of conjugal love so as to lower it more than we remember to have seen it lowered in any serious poetry before; should substitute for true affection the languors of sickly and unwholesome passion, expressed in language which, however overlaid with far-fetched and fantastic metaphor, comes at times little short of absolute pruriency." Just after Rossetti's death J. C. Shairp, Principal Shairp, wrote of *The House of Life* in the same strain. "These sonnets," he said in the *Contemporary Review*, "not only express, but brood over, thoughts and imaginations which should not be expressed, or even dwelt on in secret thought. . . . What would become of our English homes if an atmosphere like this were allowed to pervade them?" Shairp and the Edinburgh Reviewer appear to have assumed that the offspring of a chivalrous Christian gentleman, even if he be a

layman, are begotten inattentively, that a pure woman's children are conceived, like Maia's,

> Twixt sleepe and wake, after she weary was
> With bathing in the Acidalian brooke.

Nevertheless, I cannot be astonished that people were slow to decipher Rossetti's love poems. Anything but a sickly lover, he took sickness so much for granted as one of the marks of love that he would have denied that high name to any feeling which Principal Shairp, for example, would have commended on the score of its wholesomeness and health. Rossetti's lovers are at once sick and unashamed, innocent and curiously considering. In his House of Life the bodily union of lovers has equal rights with those elaborately derivative relations, delicate, tender, spiritual, the source of which, as the lovers would not if they could forget, is this union and their longing for it. No wonder Principal Shairp was upset. The passion Rossetti unveiled to him was both physical and yet sanctionable somehow, so far as one could make out, by the church, by some church in which desire, grown mystic, sang anthems. These lovers, and perhaps in their critic's eyes it was their darkest offense, disregard the alternative suggested by the apostle when he says it is better to marry than to burn. They prefer to do both. An altar, incense, a folding hothouse to yearn and swoon in, these they would include in their outfit if ever they camped out. They don't camp out, to be sure, but they spend many hours in the open air, in many places seen and remembered with beauty, and wherever they go, to groves and coverts, to hill summit or roadside dell of rest, your eye can trace them by the smoke of the incense they carry along.

A first reading of Rossetti, to the best of my recollection, is like being shut up with Desire and Memory in a small room, lit by windows of richly-stained glass. Later, when our eyes have caught the knack of not stopping at the many-colored panes, we learn to look through them, as easily as Memory and Desire are looking, upon prospects unexpectedly wide, where every

detail is amazingly definite, where every feeling however transitory, every thought no matter how curious, becomes an addition to our sensible world. Rossetti's elaborate manner is an effect and a cause of his visual ardor. So is his simplest, his "sudden and lovely" manner. They wear well, his intense pictures of love, hatred, light, heat, water, clouds. In his case even thought, being his own and never seeming dictated to him by the perishable spirit of the age, wears well. Most remarkable of all, to my taste, in their power to weather change and time, are his sonnet endings. For his sonnets do not end in words. They only appear to do so. They end in wonder, fire, memory and death, in lonely spires, in the sound of bells, in sky-spaces and sea-spaces, in

> Visions of golden futures; or that last
> Wild pageant of the accumulated past
> That clangs and flashes for a drowning man.

Rossetti will never be popular, I suppose. He is one of those poets to whose door no highway leads, but a foot track only, along which a few travellers will always be going, in single file.

MARK VAN DOREN

Poet, critic

The Van Dorens for some time have been prominent in modern American letters, having particular interest in directing the destiny of that magazine of criticism, *The Nation.* Mr. Mark Van Doren has written critical studies of Thoreau, Dryden, and Edwin Arlington Robinson; but his chief interests have been, first, in writing poetry; and, second, in reviewing books—not mere reviews either; but, rather, studies of books and their authors.

THOMAS HARDY, POET [1]

One reason, and the chief reason, for the rank in poetry achieved by Thomas Hardy before he died was that his poems were interesting. His only competitor for the highest rank of all among twentieth-century British poets, William Butler Yeats, is in certain aspects more admirable, and this can be demonstrated by reference to known laws of excellence; but Mr. Yeats is not quite so interesting, and therefore, if one is allowed to call in a consideration seldom applied these days to the criticism of poetry, not quite so good. There is actually the implication behind much discussion of the art that in proportion as a poet becomes interesting he becomes bad—interesting, I mean, in general, interesting to laymen, interesting for what he says, interesting for whatever in his poetry might have been prose, and is indeed prose when it is put in other words than the author's. I am very well aware of the desperation which pushes critics into talk about "pure" poetry, and I sympathize with their steadfastness in preferring it to be the real thing. But if poetry is in a bad way just now, and there are those who say it is, is this not because of its very purity, its admirable aridity, its unwillingness to compete with other forms of literature on some kind of human ground? With fiction, for instance.

There is reason for the fact that fiction today threatens to put down poetry, that a novelist finds thousands of readers to a poet's hundreds. And this fact has something, I suspect, to do with the eminence of Hardy as a poet. For he was both novelist and poet. He began and ended with verse, which always he called his favorite form of expression; but he did know how to tell stories about human beings, he did know how to make

[1] Reprinted from *The Nation* by permission of the author and publishers.

himself seem one, and he could do these things either in prose or in verse—both vehicles being enriched by a mind and an eye bent exclusively upon important and exciting subjects. Certainly his poems in all but a few cases tell or suggest stories. He had a lyric gift, as can be seen in his country songs and in the piece called *Let Me Enjoy* (Minor Key):

> Let me enjoy the earth no less
> Because the all-enacting Might
> That fashioned forth its loveliness
> Had other aims than my delight.
>
> About my path there flits a Fair,
> Who throws me not a word or sign;
> I'll charm me with her ignoring air,
> And laud the lips not meant for mine.
>
> From manuscripts of moving song
> Inspired by scenes and dreams unknown,
> I'll pour out raptures that belong
> To others, as they were my own.

But even these lines, which by the way ought to be sufficient refutation of the legend that Hardy could not write "smoothly" when it served his purpose to do so, have a narrative reference. They refer to the story, running throughout the man's poetry, of his successive adjustments to the universe. They recall the earlier stanza in *Nature's Questioning*, where the elements of earth are represented as being overheard by him as they ask:

> Has some Vast Imbecility,
> Mighty to build and blend,
> But impotent to tend,
> Framed us in jest, and left us now to hazardry?
>
> Or come we of an Automaton
> Unconscious of our pains? . . .
> Or are we live remains
> Of godhead dying downwards, brain and eye now gone?

The last line there is so highly characteristic of Hardy that it might be made the point of departure for a description of his whole process as a poet. At his best he always saw things this way, and reported them so—with a certain difficulty, as if he peered through mist at something solid and definite beyond, something which was solid and definite because of the very pains required to see it at all. Thus it was that he saw—not, I think, imagined—Drummer Hodge lying dead in South Africa after the Boer War.

> His homely Northern breast and brain
> Grown to some Southern tree,
> And strange-eyed constellations reign
> His stars eternally.

Thus it was that he remembered the Roman road whereon he had walked as a boy with his mother:

> The Roman Road runs straight and bare
> As the pale parting-line in hair
> Across the heath.

He remembered it precisely that way, and so would seek no pretty image less weird or less real than the one he already had. He saw, in *The Convergence of the Twain*, the Titanic drawing nearer, mile by ocean mile, to its "twin half" in "one august event"—an iceberg. And in the poem called *Near Lanivet*, 1872, he looked, as it were, clear through a woman and through something she leaned against.

> There was a stunted handpost just on the crest,
> Only a few feet high:
> She was tired, and we stopped in the twilight-time for her rest,
> At the crossways close thereby.
>
> She leant back, being so weary, against its stem,
> And laid her arms on its own,
> Each open palm stretched out to each end of them,
> Her sad face sideways thrown. . . .
>
> And we dragged on and on, while we seemed to see
> In the running of Time's far glass
> Her crucified, as she wondered if she might be
> Some day—Alas, alas!

Many of Hardy's stories in verse—*The Curate's Kindness*, *The Flirt's Tragedy*, *The Face at the Casement*, *The Moth-Signal*, *The Satin Shoes*, and *Satires of Circumstance*—are melodramatic in a way that must always have seemed old-fashioned. He himself was an incorrigible melodramatist, in prose as well as in verse. But I honor him for such a fault, if fault it is. For it is a guaranty of his central virtue, a determination to be interesting; and it is only the reverse side of a man who after all did see the world with luminous eyes and did grasp it in a plastic hand. The man who in *The Dynasts* looked down and beheld Europe as "a prone and emaciated figure, the Alps shaping like a backbone, and the branching mountain-chains like ribs, the peninsular plateau of Spain forming a head" saw more or less, perhaps, than he should have seen; but what he saw one does not forget. One does not forget Hardy's poems, though the novels, the farther they recede into the background, tend the more to pay the penalty of their complexity—the greatest novels both longer and simpler than his. The poems, crudely worded as many of them are, invariably escape triviality; they stand there old and strong, made out of some personal metal that no other poet will ever use or need to use.

LEWIS MUMFORD

Critic, essayist

The primary subject of Mr. Mumford's writings has been architecture. He has contributed essays to architectural magazines at home and abroad. The most notable of his writings on this subject is his book *Sticks and Stones*. Mr. Mumford's interests, however, are varied: he has written on the subjects of industry, philosophy, and literature. One of his most discussed books is *The Golden Day*. Mr. Mumford feels that the most satisfactory chapter of this book is the first one, "The Origins of the American Mind," which he rewrote six times. In the Preface to the book, Mr. Mumford says,

"This book rounds out the study of American life begun in *Sticks and Stones*. Where in the first book I used architecture as an index of our civilization, in *The Golden Day* I have treated imaginative literature and philosophy as a key to our culture. Civilization and culture, the material fact and the spiritual form, are not exclusive terms; for one is never found without at least a vestige of the other: and I need not, I trust, apologize because here and there the themes of the two books interpenetrate."

"The children of the spirit and the children of the body, as Plato showed in *The Symposium*, have many resemblances; and the process of creative writing roughly resembles that of birth and nurture. There is first the embrace with life itself: the wooing, the struggle, the conquest. Then the seed of an idea is planted, and there is a slow process of incubation, when the embryo develops, scarcely known to the writer, but nourished by his blood-

The children of the spirit and the children of the body, as Plato showed in The Symposium, have many resemblances; and the process of creative writing roughly resembles that of birth. There is first the embrace with life itself: the wooing, the struggle, the conquest. Then the seed of an idea is planted, and there is a slow process of incubation, when the embryo develops, scarcely known to the writer, but nourished by his blood-stream: every thought, every act, during this period will tend to bear upon this growing body of ideas. Finally, the writer becomes aware of the child he is carrying: the ideas become clumsy and painful within him, and the hour of travail is at hand. Now he must withdraw from society, shut out external disturbances, resist many of the normal pleasures and satisfactions; perhaps only for an hour, if he be at work on some trifle, perhaps for years. Finally the work is born: that is, the pain of executing the first draft is over, and the idea has taken on an independent life. But what distorted features, what a pulpy face, what a wrinkled body! Before this poem or criticism can go forth by itself into the world it must be nourished, coddled, kept warm, watched day and night: a chapter must be recast, a whole section thrown away, sentences must be revised, words pitched to unusual meanings must be scrutinized with the aid of a dictionary; one must listen for awkward rhythms and beware of repetitious sounds; and, above all, one must reject one's happiest motives if they do not fit unobtrusively in the plan of the whole. A second draft, a third draft, perhaps a

Facsimile of part of the letter on creative writing from Lewis Mumford to the author printed on the accompanying pages.

stream: every thought, every act, during this period will tend to bear upon this growing body of ideas. Finally, the writer becomes aware of the child he is carrying: the ideas become clumsy and painful within him, and the hour of travail is at hand. Now he must withdraw from society, shut out external disturbances, resist many of the normal pleasures and satisfactions: perhaps only for an hour, if he be at work on some trifle, perhaps for years. Finally the work is born: that is, the pain of executing the first draft is over, and the idea has taken on an independent life. But what distorted features! what a pulpy face! what a wrinkled body! Before this poem or criticism can go forth by itself into the world it must be nourished, coddled, kept warm, watched day and night: a chapter must be recast, a whole section thrown away, sentences must be revised, words pitched to unusual meanings must be scrutinized with the aid of a dictionary; one must listen for awkward rhythms and beware of repetitious sounds: and, above all, one must reject one's happiest notions if they do not fit into the plan of the whole. A second draft, a third draft, perhaps a sixth draft is necessary before one's work is done. At last like a parent, one must release one's child, and stand aloof—cool, amused, objective. If one has done one's work honestly, one need not fear the result: for who knows the defects of a work better than the writer, and what critic dare be as ruthless with it as one has been one's self!"

—Lewis Mumford.

WHITMAN [1]

Literature may be evocative or formative: one plays upon sentiments, emotions, ideas that already exist: the other changes the very attitude of the audience, and calls new ones forth. The common American of the Golden Day responded to Longfellow and Whittier; for these men caught his ordinary mood, measured off and rhymed; and even when Whittier and Lowell wrote on abolition themes, they were only touching strings which a Garrison or a Wendell Phillips had already set in motion. It is amusing to note the way in which ante-bellum America responded to Whitman. Emerson and Thoreau were quick to see his genius, even to proclaim it. Lesser people, however, like Moncure Conway, were a little disappointed in him: they expected to find in Whitman the common workman, grown vocal, someone who could be taken into society and patronized; someone who would bolster up their notion of a poet who had risen from the lowly ranks.

Whitman was not a democrat, in the sense of being a popular mediocrity; he was a man of genius; who, mid all his school teaching, editing, carpentering, type-setting, and what-not remained consecrated to the profession of letters: Jesus of Sirach was no more certain of his vocation. Whitman was Pygmalion to his own Galatea: he had formed himself, so that he might give a new model to America. The imperturbable landscape, the satisfaction and aplomb of animals, the ecstasy of hearty lovers, the meditations of one who sits withdrawn in the crowd, or on a mountain top—Whitman extracted from these things a new shape, which was himself. Every poem of Whitman's is the man; every part of the man threw forth tendrils

[1] From *The Golden Day*, by Lewis Mumford, pp. 128–137, published by Horace Liveright.

which clung to the objects of poems. One could not become a sympathetic reader of Whitman without re-forming oneself into an approximation of this new shape. Only commonplace works of art reflect the everyday personality of the reader: the supreme works always show or hint of the new shape the reader may become: they are prophetic, formative. One might remove Longfellow without changing a single possibility of American life; had Whitman died in the cradle, however, the possibilities of American life would have been definitely impoverished. He created a new pattern of experience and character. The work he conceived still remains to be done: the America he evoked does not as yet exist.

Whitman was a poet in the braid Scots sense of makkar: a maker or creator. He was conscious of the fact that the accumulated culture of Europe had lost a good part of its original meaning, through lack of direct contact with the new forces of discovery, science, democracy: the work of the old makkars was crumbling away; at best, it was repeated by rote, as in the churches, without any sense of the living reality, or the finer passages were rolled on the tongue, for sensation's sake, by an aristocratic minority. "Note to-day," Whitman observed in *Democratic Vistas*, "a curious spectacle and conflict. . . . Science, testing absolutely all thoughts, all works, has already burst well upon the world—a sun, mounting, most illuminating, most glorious, surely never again to set. But against it, deeply entrenched, holding possession, yet remains (not only through the churches and schools but by imaginative literature and unregenerate poetry) the fossil theology of the mythic-materialistic superstitious, untaught and credulous, fable-loving primitive ages of humanity."

Whitman saw that the office of sacred literature was no longer being performed; or at all events, that those who were pursuing it were not fully conscious of either the need or the opportunity. Vulgar literature was, indeed, growing hugely. "To-day, in books, in the rivalry of writers, especially novelists, success (so-called) is for him or her who strikes the mean flat average,

the sensational appetite for stimulus, incident, persiflage, etc., and depicts to the common caliber, sensual, exterior life." What remained of sacred literature was insufficient to offset this. It was to establish a central point in literature, in terms of science and the modern, that Whitman created: American poetry was to do in our day what the Vedas, the Nackas, the Talmud, the Old Testament, the Gospel, Plato's works had done for their time: it was to crystallize our most precious experience and in turn to modify, by that act of crystallization, the daily routine.

What, in fact, were the active formative literatures when Whitman wrote? In the Western World the principal one was, without doubt, that great miscellany called the Old Testament, supplemented by the Gospels; and among the cultivated classes, Homer, Horace, Plutarch, Dante, Shakespeare, Corneille, played a lively but minor part. The Romantic Movement, which went back to the ballads and the folk-literature of the various regions of Europe, was a recognition of the fact that something was lacking in both the Hebrew and the classic traditions, and in the literature which was directly founded upon them. What was lacking was the direct historic connection with a people, a place, and a special way of life. It is true that all literature has certain common characters, and no great works of the spirit are foreign and remote; but, as Whitman pointed out, "something is rooted in the invisible roots, the profoundest meanings, of a place, race, or nationality," and the Romantic Movement had cut loose from classic and Hebraic influences in order to absorb this more intimate order of meaning and find a nearer and fresher source of spiritual activity. Blake, Keats, Shelley, had partly achieved this; Wordsworth alone, however, had created new forms without relying on a mythic-materialistic past.

With what was universal in all these efforts, Whitman could sympathize: Homer and Shakespeare and the Bible had been his daily food. He sought to do for common men and women, for the contemporary and the ordinary-heroic, what Shakespeare had achieved in his great images of the aristocratic life.

In America, in modern life, on the farm and in the laboratory, in the progress of souls along the grand roads of the Universe, in company with the Great Companions, the swift and majestic men, the capacious and broad-bosomed women—here was the stuff for new Vedas, Cycles, and Testaments. Whitman overvalued, if anything, the contrivances of political democracy; but that was only a first step; he overcountenanced, if anything, the absorption of America in materialistic effort; that, however, was only the second step. Neither political democracy nor industrial progress were for him anything but a prelude to the third stage, rising out of the two previous ones, and creating a "native expression spirit" and an abundance of rich personalities.

In his effort to keep ballasted and always find a landing place in contemporary existence, Whitman was perhaps too receptive and undiscriminating in his acknowledgment of current values and aims; in his old age, he accepted with child-like delight the evidences of material prosperity he found on his Western trip. His Hegelianism was dangerous stuff: it led him to identify the Real and the Ideal, instead of seeing, as William James put it, that they were dynamically continuous. But at the core, Whitman was never deceived: he knew that the meaning of all current activity lay only in the forms or symbols it created and the rational purposes it embodied; and so far from believing that the work of the poet or artist would be supplanted by science, he believed that "the highest and subtlest and broadest truths of modern science wait for their true assignment and last vivid flashes of light—as Democracy waits for its—through first-class metaphysicians and speculative philosophs—laying the basements and foundations for these new, more expanded, more harmonious, more melodious, freer American poems." To indicate these new meanings, to open up these new relationships, Whitman wrote his poems. I can think of no one in whom the unconscious and the conscious process worked more in harmony: the life and the doctrine were one. So far as Whitman went, he achieved his end.

So far as he went! Most people are unaware that the *Leaves of Grass*, *Calamus*, *The Children of Adam*, are only a part of the vast canvas he projected; they do not realize that he was diverted from his original intention and never lived to complete it. The *Leaves of Grass* were to deal chiefly with the palpable and the material; there was to be a complementary volume which would center mainly on the spiritual and the inactual—upon death and immortality and final meanings—for he was the poet of the body and he was the poet of the soul. Alas! the Civil War came. He threw himself into it as a hospital visitor, giving his personality and his radiant health to the sick and the wounded, as these men had given themselves in the camp and on the battlefield. Within a few years this ordeal exacted its revenge: he became paralyzed, and as he never fully recovered his physical powers, his mental powers diminished, too: if they are still at their summit in *Drum-Taps*, they recurred only fitfully in the later poems: and though he could outline his aspiration with a firm hand in *Democratic Vistas*, published in 1871, he could no longer model it and round it out. What he meant to create is implied in all his poems; the whole of it was never, perhaps, expressed.

Whitman himself had felt that the War for the American Union was the Odyssey of his generation; but except for himself and Herman Melville, no one lived to write about it in those terms; the stories of Ambrose Bierce, Stephen Crane, and Upton Sinclair did not treat it in this vein. Whitman did not see that the great conflict might have a Punic ending. As it turned out, the war was a struggle between two forms of servitude, the slave and the machine. The machine won, and the human spirit was almost as much paralyzed by the victory as it would have been by the defeat. An industrial transformation took place over night: machines were applied to agriculture; they produced new guns and armaments; the factory régime, growing tumultuously in the Eastern cities, steadily undermined the balanced regimen of agriculture and industry which characterized the East before the war.

The machines won: and the war kept on. Its casualties were not always buried at Antietam or Gettysburg; they moldered, too, in libraries, studies, offices. The justifiable ante-bellum optimism of Emerson turned into a waxen smile. Whitman lost his full powers in what should have been his prime. Among the young men, many a corpse was left, to go through the routine of living. But before the Golden Day was over, the American mind had lived through a somber and beautiful hour, the hour of Hawthorne and Melville. With them, the sun turned to a candle, and cast black shadows upon the wall, not the empty grotesque shadows of Poe, but the shapes of a magnified if distorted humanity.

REBECCA WEST

Novelist, critic

Miss West began writing brilliant articles of criticism on social, political, and literary subjects for some of England's notable periodicals before she had reached the age of twenty. Characteristic of the youthful person who is intellectual and creative, she was fearless. Many older persons would not have dared attack the literary reputations of the respectably accepted, nor have undertaken the difficult literary analysis of a figure like Henry James. Miss West did both. Her criticism *Henry James* was published in 1916. Since then she has published, besides more critical work, three novels, *The Return of the Soldier*, *The Judge*, and *Harriet Hume*.

"You might tell your young people that the whole future of the human race lies in the right use of language, because a vital discovery or a spiritual experience of an individual flows over and gets lost if it is not made available for the use of the rest of humanity by being put into language. The strength of a spiritual teacher depends entirely on his use of words. St. Clare was probably as great a saint as St. Catherine of Sienna, but her influence is restricted to the Order she founded, which is an influence restricted to a place, and likely to perish in time, while Catherine hoarded her spiritual discoveries in her dialogues which can be read to the end of time by anybody who is interested in that form of human development.

"As to whether my writing is a mere pastime, done

easily, under inspiration and without many revisions—it is not. Nor do I know of any writer of any merit at all who writes easily.

"I cannot recommend to your students any particular past or contemporary writers because I think it ought to be the general rule that young people should read every writer they ever hear of. Nobody else can tell them what they will find useful."

—Rebecca West.

EARLY IMPRESSIONS [1]

In 1855, when Henry James was twelve, the family yielded to its passion and crossed the Atlantic. The following four years were of immense importance to Mr. James, and consequently to ourselves, for he had been born with a mind that received impressions as if they had been embraces and remembered them with as fierce a leaping of the blood; just as his brother William's mind acquired and created systems of thought as joyously as other men like meeting friends and establishing a family. He found London in the main jolly, rather ugly, but comfortable and full of character, just as he had seen it in *Punch*, but here and there detected—notably on a drive from London Bridge—black outcrops of Hogarth's London. "It was a soft June evening, with a lingering light and swarming crowds, as they then seemed to me, of figures reminding me of George Cruikshank's Artful Dodger and his Bill Sykes and his Nancy, only with the bigger brutality of life, which pressed upon the cab, the Early Victorian four-wheeler, as we jogged over the Bridge, and cropped up in more and more gaslit patches for all our course, culminating, somewhere far to the west, in the vivid picture, framed by the cab window, of a woman reeling backward as a man felled her to the ground with a blow in the face." He knew Paris, then being formed by the free flourish of Baron Haussmann into its present splendours of wide regularity, yet still homely with remnants of the dusty ruralism of its pre-Napoleonic state; he saw all the pretty show of the Second Empire, he stood in the Champs-Elysées and watched the baby Prince Imperial roll by to St. Cloud with his escort of blue and silver cent-gardes; and the Galerie d'Apollon in the Louvre, its floors gleaming with polished wood, its walls glowing with

[1] Reprinted from *Henry James*, pp. 14–19, by permission of James Nisbet and Co., Ltd., London, publishers.

masterpieces, and its proportions awesomely interminable and soaring, was the scene of his young imaginative life. Those were the great places; but there were also Geneva and Boulogne and Zurich and Bonn, the differences of which he savoured, and above all the richness of desultory contact with arts and persons of the various countries. He gaped at the exquisiteness of ugly Rose Cheri at the Gymnase, copied Delacroix, read *Evan Harrington* as it came out in *Once a Week;* was at school with a straight-nosed boy called Henry Houssaye and a snub-nosed boy called Coquelin; was tutored by Robert Thompson, the famous Edinburgh teacher who was afterwards to instruct Robert Louis Stevenson and many other eminent Scots in Jacobite sympathies as well as the more usual subjects, and by M. Lerambert whose verse had been praised by Sainte-Beuve in his *Causeries*. "Impressions," writes Mr. James of this period, "were not merely all right but were the dearest things in the world."

And one must remember that not only were impressions much to young Henry James, they were all he had. His mental life consisted of nothing else. His natural inaptitude for acquiring systematised knowledge was probably intensified by the study of foreign languages entailed by this travel; for if a child spends its time learning several systems of naming things it plainly has less energy to spare for learning systems of arranging things. At any rate his inability to grasp the elements of arithmetic and mathematics led to his removal from the Polytechnic School at Zurich, and was the cause of despair in all his tutors. But most minds, however incapable they may be of following the exact sciences or speculative thought, have some sort of idea of the system of the universe inserted into them by early instruction in one or other of the religious faiths. This unifying influence was refused to Henry James by the circumstance that his father had found certain religious doubts that had almost driven him from the ministry solved in the works of Swedenborg, which he found not at all incredible but—as he once said in a phrase that showed him his son's own father—fairly "insipid with

veracity." On this foundation of Swedenborgianism he had built up for himself a religion which was "nothing if not a philosophy, extraordinarily complex and worked out and original, intensely personal as an exposition, yet not only susceptible of application, but clamorous for it, to the whole field of consciousness, nature and society, history, knowledge, all human relations and questions, every pulse of the process of our destiny." This was no playground for the young intelligence, so young Henry James was told to prepare himself by drinking from such springs as seemed to him refreshing. When he was asked to what church he went he was bidden by his father to reply that "we could plead nothing less than the whole privilege of Christendom, and that there was no communion, even that of the Catholics, even that of the Jews, even that of the Swedenborgians, from which we need find ourselves excluded." He certainly liked to exercise this privilege, but he admits that "my grounds may have been but the love of the *exhibition* in general, thanks to which figures, faces, furniture, sounds, smells and colours became for me, wherever enjoyed, and enjoyed most where most collected, a positive little orgy of the senses and riot of the mind." Which was to be expected; as also was the fact that he never broke his childish habit of regarding his father's religion as a closed temple standing in the centre of his family life, the general holiness of which he took for granted so thoroughly that it never occurred to him to investigate its particulars.

ERNEST BOYD

Critic

It is fortunate that Irish, English, and American literatures, which have been so prolific in the twentieth century, should have such an able critic as Ernest Boyd. He was born in Dublin, Ireland. His experiences have been varied: he was a member of the editorial staff of the *Irish Times;* later he entered consular service; and still later became a resident of the United States. His opinions on literary matters are widely respected. *Ireland's Literary Renaissance* is one of his notable studies of Irish literature. *Portraits, Real and Imaginary* give intimate glimpses of notable men of letters and of imaginary type characters who have something to do with things literary and social.

"My experience has been that the smoother an author's style appears to be, the more likely it is that a great deal of labour has been spent upon it. The easy flow of such English as George Moore's, for example, is the result of incessant and laborious re-writing. My own method of composition is quite different. I never write anything down until everything is ready in my mind; then I proceed without any changes until the last paragraph or last chapter is finished. I always write in longhand, with almost no corrections, so that my manuscripts do not present any signs of effort. The effort takes place during the period of gestation, before I start to write. If I do not find myself able to proceed with my subject without hesitation,

I know that my ideas have not ripened, so I abandon the effort until they have. Usually I know exactly what the last chapter of a book will be when I begin the first. I do not go on from chapter to chapter, but feel my book as a whole."

—Ernest Boyd.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW [1]

A long, lanky figure with nervous, swinging gait, and the most voluminous light brown overcoat, reaching down almost to his heels, or bellied by the wind and floating behind him like the tail of some bustling comet. He strides at a very rapid pace through the streets of this native Dublin of his, whose accent he has preserved, but which has seen little of the distinguished expatriate, George Bernard Shaw, during the forty odd years of his struggle and fame in London. He is on his way to address the first meeting of his compatriots which has ever been so honored. He does not approve of Dublin. "There is nothing more destructive," he will say, "than the sterile mockery of Dublin." He does not approve very much of Ireland, for that matter. There is too much propaganda for the Irish language and not enough for dental clinics. "I have never seen so many bad teeth as during my visit here." A hiss from the patriotic audience, protesting against such blasphemy against the sacred tongue of Kathleen ni Houlihan. Imperturbably Bernard Shaw retorts: "If you hiss me again, I'll deliver my lecture in Irish, and not one of you will understand a word of it."

When he comes on the platform, memory protests in vain against this betrayal of the legend of the tawny suit, red tie, and flannel shirt of the heroic age of Fabianism. This spruce old gentleman, in a double-breasted blue serge suit looks like a retired sea captain, only the amazing pallor of his face and the small conical hands indicate that his origins have nothing nautical about them but this blue serge orthodoxy and meticulous neatness. What remains, however, of the legendary G. B. S. is the beard, now white, but still thrust derisively at his audience

[1] From *Portraits Real and Imaginary*. Reprinted by special permission of the author.

to emphasize a point, as in the days of its flamboyant redness, and those quizzical, animated gray-blue eyes beneath bushy eyebrows, whose gray in no way detracts from their Mephistophelian lift at the outer corners. As he speaks he admires his long fingers, holding them up for inspection with the gesture of a manicurist examining her handiwork. He talks on the platform as he does in private, at a conversational level, entirely extempore, and with deliberate suppression of all oratorical effects and appeals to the emotions. He addresses himself to the mind, and not the heart. He throws back his head, and his eyes glitter and flash when he makes a thrust which he judges effective.

Dublin, however, is not the place where he shines. There are too many Dubliners as detached from England as himself, who get no thrill of blasphemy or wonder at his aloof analysis of the English soul, which creates such an impression in London amongst natural-born Britishers. His staple dish of Fabian economics is also wasted because his Irish audience is unfamiliar with the rudiments of that doctrine, and is anxious only for a word on the eternal question of Ireland's wrongs. On this subject Bernard Shaw, it seems, is exasperating, in spite of his reputation in England as a seditious Irishman. He turns to the topic of Irish literature, since he has actually read and met Irish authors, whereas he is completely out of touch with the generation at work in the social and political fields. When repatriated, Bernard Shaw, the Socialist, finds the country gentry more congenial than these wild-eyed people who organize trade unions, strikes, insurrections, and Free States. The atavism of the Irish Protestant gentleman is strong.

On literature, however, he has promised to speak. The scene is one of Dublin's intellectual slums, where the distinguished visitor has blundered, owing to a similarity of name between this organization and the National Literary Society, an institution of some historical pretensions, at least. The mistake has not facilitated a task already rather beyond even Bernard Shaw's power of improvisation. In the course of conversation I gently insinuate that, on this occasion, the tables are turned. *This* time he is

addressing an audience which knows all about the subject, while he knows almost nothing. He looks at me disapprovingly and has no reply. On the platform his deficiencies reach the level of mere echolalia; his next sentence is suggested by the last word of what he has just said, with but the vaguest relation to the ostensible theme. The wit and paradoxes are absent. One hears, with the recognition due to a friend from copy-book days, that travel broadens the mind, that literature must be developed by the crossing of cultures, that Irish literature is negligible except for those writers who have traveled and lived abroad: James Joyce, John M. Synge, James Stephens. His repertory of names is short, and conveniently so, for it would be sad to break in upon so profound a meditation with the names of James Clarence Mangan, Samuel Ferguson, Standish O'Grady, George W. Russell, Francis Ledwidge, Daniel Corkery, Seumas O'Kelly, Padraic O'Conaire, and many others, all of whom lived and wrote in Ireland, and failed to follow the example of Bernard Shaw.

While these thoughts naturally occur to the mind of his humblest auditor, Shaw is admiring his nails and aggressively proclaiming, without knowing it, his complete ignorance of Anglo-Irish literature. In his haste to say something that will disturb, he soon is caught in the meandering stream of his remarks, and is dilating, nobody knows why, on the absurdities of those who claim that India has a literature and culture of its own. Visions of barbarians with rings in their noses begin to haunt us, the voice of the brilliant Socialist, Fabian, playwright and paradoxer, goes on pronouncing a discourse which has the peculiar ring one would associate with the confidences of an Anglo-Indian official, retired, or home on leave, when the requisite proportion of whisky and soda has induced in him the usual lamentations about the "beastly natives." It becomes my painful duty to remind the speaker that we have heard all this sort of thing before, to attempt, with some show of good humor, to insinuate that even intellectual slum-children do not propose votes of thanks unless they have something to be thankful for, to appeal

to the speaker's reputation for better things, to his higher nature, so to speak. He disapproves of this disrespectful levity; it seems his iconoclasm does not begin at home. Bernard Shaw does not agree with Dublin, and Dublin does not improve Bernard Shaw. The return of the native is a qualified success.

CARL VAN DOREN

Essayist, critic, editor

Mr. Carl Van Doren was for a number of years literary editor of *The Nation*. He has contributed literary criticisms to various important magazines of criticism. Being chiefly interested in the development of American letters, he has written several important studies on that subject, such as *The American Novel*, *Contemporary American Novelists*, and *Moby Dick;* he has been one of the editors of the *Cambridge History of American Literature;* and has lectured at Columbia University on American literature. He has written other critical studies such as *The Life of Thomas Love Peacock*. Other of his works, typical of what he has done, he mentions in his letter. Before coming to New York, he taught English literature and composition at the University of Illinois.

"I might risk advice to a specific writer with reference to a specific piece of writing, but never advice to writers in general. The best I can do is to tell you, since you ask me, a few things about my own habits. I do not like to write. Invariably I put off whatever I have to do, dreading the strain, and turning to any possible diversion. When the clock or the calendar tells me I can wait no longer, I generally find myself growing excited. Out of this excitement comes an idea about which my thoughts swarm in a crowded confusion. I cannot, however, begin until my opening sentence comes suddenly into my mind, generally with all the words in place, and always in the rhythm and

tone of the entire article or chapter or section which is to be written. Thereafter my work is mere scrupulous obstinacy. I cannot, as many writers can, write a rapid first draft and then revise it. I have—or feel that I have—to be satisfied with each sentence before I can go on to the next. This may take a minute, or it may take hours of thinking, reading, brooding, worrying, scheming, to assure myself that what I am saying is as true as I can make it and that I am saying it in the best way I can find. Some writers, I believe, start with a firm pattern and then ruthlessly fit their matter into it. With me, the pattern, though I may have had a clear one at the start, and though it does not drift into other shapes as I write, largely takes care of itself, emerging from the details and not dominating them. My struggles with a particular sentence do not, so far as I can tell, throw me off the track of the main argument or narrative. When I am satisfied and can go on, there is the next sentence waiting for me. If I am in a sensible mood I ordinarily work no more than three or four hours at a stretch, but if my material proves resistant I am likely to lose my senses and go on for ten or even twenty hours, struggling in the grip of an obscure compulsion, and raging at myself for my stupidity. When I am exhausted I give up, always perfectly convinced that I shall never write another line. Then, after sleeping or deliberately losing myself in something else, customarily I come back and finish the task without excessive effort.

"Once I have written anything, and have read the proofs, I am almost wholly indifferent to it. It seems to me that I judge what I have done with about the same impartiality as I should use with another writer. Of all I have published I like best the chapter called 'Greek Girl' in my novel, *The Ninth Wave*. *The American Novel* I

consider my best treatise and *Many Minds* my best collection of critical studies. The chapter called 'Literature' in Charles Beard's *Whither Mankind* is my most philosophical piece of writing; 'Why I am an Unbeliever' in *Twelve Modern Apostles* (Duffield, 1926) is my most accurate expression of a personal opinion; the 'Introduction' to *The Writings of Thomas Paine* (The Modern Library) is my most careful study of a man in relation to public affairs; *James Branch Cabell* is my most thoroughgoing study of a single writer; 'Lucifer from Nantucket' in W. A. Drake's *American Criticism: 1926* (Harcourt, Brace) is my most extensive analysis of a single book (*Moby Dick*); 'The Shadow of a Triangle' in *Other Provinces* is my most nearly satisfactory short story; the three related sketches called 'The Scholar,' 'The Gipsy,' 'The Barbarian' in *Other Provinces* are my most truthful renderings of actual persons. In none of these, however, do I take any pride, for I think I have learned to write only in the last two years, and I have not yet published much of what I have written during that time."

—Carl Van Doren.

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But this was not a pedantic scruple, strangely in the

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was pedantic for Elinor Wylie to give the utmost care to her personal

appearance in a world in which she would readily have admitted that

all appearances are untrustworthy. It was, rather,

one of those touches of exactness by which she maintained her

brilliant integrity among things too often tedious and chaotic. Curve

Facsimile of a page of manuscript from the essay on Elinor Wylie by Carl Van Doren reprinted on the following pages.

ELINOR WYLIE[1]

1885–1928

It was always a delight and an adventure to put some lump of raw material into Elinor Wylie's hands and then wait to see the design and color which it would have when it came back. There was, for instance, that portrait of a frontier blue-stocking outlined by Caroline Matilda Stansbury Kirkland in *A New Home—Who'll Follow?*

"This young lady," said Mrs. Kirkland of Eloise Fidler, "was not as handsome as she would fain have been, if I may judge by the cataracts of ash-coloured ringlets which shaded her cheeks, and the exceeding straitness of the stays which restrained her somewhat exuberant proportions. . . . Her dress was in the height of fashion, and all her accoutrements *point device*. A gold pencil-case of the most delicate proportions was suspended by a kindred chain around a neck which might be called whity-brown; and a note-book of corresponding lady-like-ness was peeping from the pocket of her highly-useful apron of blue silk—ever ready to secure a passing thought or an elegant quotation. Her album—she was just the person to have an album—was resplendent in gold and satin, and the verses which meandered over its emblazoned pages were of the most unexceptionable quality, overlaid with flowers and gems—love and despair. . . .

"Miss Fidler wrote her own poetry, so that she had ample employment for her time while with us in the woods. It was unfortunate that she could not walk out much on account of her shoes. She was obliged to make out with diluted inspiration. The nearest approach she usually made to the study of Nature, was to sit on the wood-pile, under a girdled tree, and there, with her gold pencil in hand, and her 'eyne, gray as glas,' rolled upwards, poefy by the hour. . . .

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"And, standing marvel of Montacute, no guest at morning or night ever found the fair Eloise ungloved. Think of it! In the very wilds to be always like a cat in nutshells, alone useless where all are so busy. . . . And then her shoes! 'Saint Crispin Crispianus' never had so self-sacrificing a votary. No shoemaker this side of New York could make a sole papery enough; no tannery out of France could produce materials for this piece of exquisite feminine foppery. . . ."

In Elinor Wylie's hands the portrait swiftly fell into a new design and took on fresh colors.

"Miss Rosalie Lillie," begins the fifth chapter of *The Orphan Angel*, "was seated upon the woodpile in an attitude of negligent grace; her fine eyes were fixed above the distant tamarack-trees in contemplation of some winged chimæra of the mind. A gold pencil-case was suspended by a delicate chain around the lady's creamy throat; a notebook peeped from the pocket of her blue satin apron, and a gilded album lay within reach. Under a furred cloak her attire was frail and silken; she wore thin-soled bronze slippers, and her hands were encased in gloves of primrose kid-skin.

"Miss Lillie was a singularly lovely girl; her features were regular and her figure tall and classically formed. She had a rich abundance of chestnut hair and her velvet eyes were the colour of purple-brown pansies. She looked very expensive and unsuitable against a background of enormous forest trees and ragged rail fences; the smoky November sun picked out the Italian cameo upon her bosom and increased the splendid damask of her cheek."

Where the document wanders, hitching itself along with asides and afterthoughts, the work of art marches with as much vigor as precision. One stroke, and the singular priestess is mounted upon her woodpile, which in the original she reaches only after several paragraphs. Another stroke, and she is contemplating "some winged chimæra of the mind," though in the original she does nothing happier than, rolling her eyes upward, "poefy by the hour." Thereafter, stroke by stroke, the portrait is laughingly perfected. Kind epithets increase the lady's beauty. Her fragile shoes become thin-soled bronze slippers.

Her nondescript gloves appear as primrose kidskin. Her merely gray eyes turn to the color of purple-brown pansies. And, what is more important, she is no longer the object of homespun ridicule. If she looks very expensive and unsuitable against her background of forest tree and rail fences, that may not be, the overtones somehow imply, entirely her fault, but partly the fault of nature for being so enormous and of the works of man for being so ragged.

The single instance is enough to illustrate the magic which Elinor Wylie practised. It was not alone the felicity of her words, though that was both curious and correct. It was not, added to this, the purity of her outlines or the harmony of her colors. It was, more than anything else, the wary audacity with which she seized upon whatever she needed for her art and the energy with which she carried out her ventures. When, for *The Orphan Angel*, she chose to take Shelley, as Shiloh, across the American continent, she moved into a world almost as strange and unfamiliar to her as it would have been to him. Her natural home was in the cities on either side of the great Atlantic lake, not in the shaggy wilderness. Yet she hardly drew a breath as she plunged into researches, in old maps, books of travel, descriptions of the frontier, which would have sickened many learned doctors. And where the doctors might have been timid, hugging bare facts as if they were stepping-stones, Elinor Wylie struck out with the kind of courage which knows that if there is no way then a way must be cut. She was always high-handed in such matters, however her grace and charm and mirth might adorn her actions with courtesy.

She was, indeed, high-handed in all matters, so that she made half-measures and compromises, compliance and suppleness seem flat and dull. Coming, seven or eight years ago, somewhat unexpectedly into the world of writers in New York, she had from the first the air of one who touched nothing that she did not conquer. Pain and disillusion in another world had freed her mind and clarified her language. As she had not published the usual juvenilia to be held against her, she was, as writer, judged

by work which was mature from the beginning. Even in her verse, where she came nearest to speaking her heart about her own history and fate, she had an irony which is seldom found in minor poets and never found in minor persons. In her novels, glittering with knowledge of human life, particularly in its comic aspects, she had such a look of dealing lightly with every theme that her easy strength could not be doubted. She could not help playing. She was not built to dig heavily for truth in one solemn spot. She ranged to catch it. It is true that she could, characteristically, spend hours assuring herself that at the period of *Mr. Hodge and Mr. Hazard* there was actually in existence a small edition of Plato which Mr. Hazard might have slipped into his pocket. But this was not a pedantic scruple, strangely asserted in the midst of what was as a whole a fantasy, any more than it was pedantic for Elinor Wylie to give the utmost care to her personal appearance in a world in which she would readily have admitted that all appearances are untrustworthy. It was, rather, one of those touches of exactness by which she maintained her brilliant integrity among things too often tedious and chaotic. Once dressed, either as to her person or as to her book, she could dare as much as anybody. She had a physical courage rare in imaginative persons. While she was writing *The Venetian Glass Nephew*, issued as a serial in a magazine, she not only risked publishing the first part before the rest of the story had been written but she risked sending the successive parts to the printers without having made a copy. Though much then hung for her upon the fortunes of that novel, she was too impatient to be prudent. The chance she took, by heightening the excitement in which she worked, seemed to serve her more than security could have done.

Elinor Wylie might, of course, have been gracefully, charmingly, mirthfully high-handed by being as insensitive as the iced chalk to which one admirer compared her during her early days in New York. In reality, she was so sensitive that she was likely at any moment to burst into flame. If there were thought to be contradictions in her nature, it was because people who saw

her strength could not understand her shrinking or because people who saw her shrinking could not guess her strength. Yet there was no essential contradiction. She was a woman who had beauty and genius. Beauty compelled her and genius compelled her, both of them, according to their customs, without always giving her the advantage of simple motives for her compulsions. Doubly driven, she was also doubly sensitive. With two careers, alike natural and instinctive, going along side by side in one woman, she could not avoid the pains of various mishaps. But her compulsions would not allow her to count the pain and shift her course into more comfortable paths. With the pride of beauty and genius, she went on and endured.

She herself found almost a sufficient peace in the irony which finally became her habit. It was not quite sufficient. To have been that it would have had to run into cynical complacency, which it never did. Instead, it stopped with giving to her conversation, as to her writings, the white light of a beguiling and surprising intelligence, which might, nevertheless, be broken up, in an instant, into its constituent colors by the outbreak of a mood. She who deserved admiration and demanded it like a beauty who was a genius, could suddenly, from some inept word or awkward gesture, suffer like a child because the bright surface of the occasion had been flecked. Yet, almost as suddenly, she could rise again to laughter, or lose her mood in subtle speculations, or turn to old learning or new scandal. In virtually the same breath she could be suspicious and ingenuous, insolent and tender, capricious and steadfast, desperate and hilarious, stirringly profound and exquisitely superficial. Her moods, however, never seriously threatened her intelligence, as they never touched her austere, if imperious, integrity. Moving a good deal, latterly, in more or less casual and easy-going circles, she inclined to formality. Familiar with the arguments of devils and the strategems of witches, she was definitely on the side of angels. She was high-handed because she was gifted and proud and good. It is bitter to estimate how many balanced dull women might have been taken with how much smaller loss.

JOHN MIDDLETON MURRY

Critic

After Mr. Murry was graduated from Oxford, he became a reviewer for the *London Times*. In 1919, he became editor of the *Athenæum*, and since then has been editor of the *New Adelphi*. All these are important English periodicals.

It was while he was an undergraduate at Oxford and an editor of one of their publications that he met Katherine Mansfield, who afterwards became his wife. He has edited all her books.

"I am primarily a literary critic, though I have found that, quite inevitably, literary criticism, because it is *criticism* (that is to say, judgment by standards either implicit or explicit to consciousness) leads one into ultimate questions of metaphysics, morality, and religion. Because I am a literary critic my notions concerning composition are of two kinds: those based on the study of other men's methods of writing, and those which I actually follow myself. Only the latter, it seems to me, are relevant to this book.

"In honesty, I have to confess that my method of composition is theoretically abominable. I am, apparently, incapable of thinking out even a brief essay beforehand. I make no plan and follow none. I have always, somewhere in my mind, a half-formed thought, which is always very elusive, and which I struggle to express. I never succeed in expressing it to my complete satisfaction. But I generally

§

If we ~~can~~ understand the "poetic" as arising in a fragment of experience experienced after this fashion, and communicating a like experience to ourselves; and if we ~~can~~ imagine this possibility of experience not, indeed, completely realized, for that ~~as we have seen~~ is impossible, but become to some extent habitual, so that it was no longer for the individual mind a divine and capricious visitant, but an actual standard of ~~possible~~ experience; ~~it would be easy for us~~ we may (in one sense) to see that Beauty would cease to have meaning for such a mind. For a mind for which ~~there~~ all experience is 'valid', or for a mind ~~for~~ which the possibility of experiencing all experience as 'valid', (apprehended) there could be no ~~distinction~~ distinction between the beautiful & the ugly in experience, or between the good & the evil. Valid experience could be significantly described as beautiful only when set against a predominant background of indifferent & undividualized experience. ~~In short~~, Beauty would not be a quality of experience at all.

~~And~~ Thus in a ~~any~~ system based upon the ultimate supreme reality of such 'valid' experience, Beauty would be, what indeed it ought to be, the attribute solely of those creations & constructions of the human mind which communicate valid experience. Beauty would then be identical with the "poetic" and coextensive; it would exist wherever there was communication of 'valid' experience, and nowhere else. A 'valid' experience, experienced immediately, without the interposition of art, would be simply valid. ~~Not~~ But I imagine that any advance in our metaphysic will prevent men & women from saying ~~that~~ "How beautiful!" before a landscape or a sunset. ~~is a beautiful landscape" or "That is beautiful sunset".~~ The habit

Facsimile of a page of discarded manuscript by John Middleton Murry.

find that when I have reached the end of a piece of writing I have managed to utter a certain number of thoughts relevant to the half-formed thought which I have been struggling to make clear to myself: very often these thoughts, which seem to me true, are quite unlike anything I had in my mind when I began.

"The labour of composition is, in my case, of two kinds. There is this labour of struggling to express the half-formed thought,—labour which persists throughout the first writing. Then there is a second labour of endeavouring to give this first writing a reasonable shape, an explicit coherence. Generally, the first writing is not quite so chaotic as it seems it ought to be. But there is always a great deal to be done in the way of reducing (or expanding) its various elements to their right proportions.

"I suppose it amounts to this: that in my small experience a piece of writing in the first instance grows rather than is constructed. The after improvements, when they are radical, belong mainly to the constructive kind. In literature as in life, the logic follows the intuition.

"Those of my books which have satisfied me most are *Dostoevsky* (1917); *Countries of the Mind* (1921); *Discoveries* (1923); *Keats and Shakespeare* (1926); and *Jesus, Man of Genius*. None of the first three have, however, been published in America."

—John Middleton Murry.

TO BE OR NOT TO BE?[1]

A little time ago a writer—I believe, Mr. Leonard Woolf—drew our attention to the curious abuse of quotations from Shakespeare which prevails not only among the ignorant, but also among those who should, and very likely do, know better. For one instance, "the play's the thing," whereas in fact the play was only "the thing wherein" Hamlet would "catch the conscience of the king." And for another, perhaps more remarkable, there is the sentimental interpretation of

> One touch of nature makes the whole world kin,

which is, really, a very cynical observation, for the one touch of nature is

> That all with one consent praise new-born gauds,
> Though they are made and moulded of things past,
> And give to dust that is a little gilt
> More laud than gilt o'er-dusted.

A truth which has singularly little to do with the sympathetic concentration of a whole railway carriage upon a new baby.

More striking even than this strange phenomenon is the invincible misinterpretation of one of the famous and hackneyed passages in Shakespeare. I suppose that the most familiar speech in all Shakespeare is Hamlet's soliloquy: "To be or not to be." One might say that everybody knows it, and that everybody knows what it means: and everybody knows wrong. Of course, that "everybody" is an exaggeration; it must be. But it is the fact that I have never discussed the speech with any person, however educated, however familiar with Shakespeare, without finding that he was convinced that "To be or not to be" means "To live or not to live," and that the whole soliloquy is a debate upon the pros and cons of suicide.

[1] From *Things to Come.* Copyright 1928 by The Macmillan Company.

Yet the fact is plain. "To be or not to be" cannot mean "To live or not to live." The words which follow make such an interpretation quite impossible.

> To be or not to be: that is the question:
> Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
> The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
> Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
> And by opposing end them.

What is "to be or not to be" is not Hamlet, but Hamlet's attempt upon the King's life. Which is nobler? To suffer in patient silence his evil fortunes, or to take arms and act against them? To endure his troubles, or to make an end of them, not by suicide, but by opposing them?

Then comes the thought that, by killing the King, he will himself be killed; and he muses on death. It is not the death of a suicide, but the death of a rebel in arms, on which he muses.

> To die, to sleep;
> No more; and by a sleep to say we end
> The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
> That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
> Devoutly to be wished.

The thought is clear: if death were annihilation, he would rush to meet it. But—

> To die, to sleep;
> To sleep, perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;
> For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
> When we have shuffled off this mortal coil
> Must give us pause: there's the respect
> That makes calamity of so long life.

It is the thought that death may not be a total end that forces men to endure, and thus to prolong, their miseries.

> For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
> The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
> The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
> The insolence of office, and the spurns
> That patient merit of the unworthy takes. . . .

These are the calamities of life. Who would endure them?

> When he himself might his quietus make
> With a bare bodkin?

There for the first time the thought of suicide enters the soliloquy. It is a meditation on Death, and suicide enters simply as one means to death. It enters only to disappear again.

> Who would fardels bear,
> To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
> But that the dread of something after death,
> The undiscovered country from whose bourn
> No traveller returns, puzzles the will
> And makes us rather bear those ills we have
> Than fly to others that we know not of?

Hamlet has now returned to his first question: 'To act (and die) or not to act (and live)?' And the answer is plain. Not the thought of death, which will be the inevitable consequence of his act,[1] but the dread of something after death, paralyses his will to act and kill the king. And this conclusion is enforced and made manifest.

> Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
> And thus the native hue of resolution
> Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
> And enterprises of great pitch and moment
> In this regard their currents turn awry
> And lose the name of action.

Not even Hamlet regards suicide as "an enterprise of great pitch and moment." The theme of the soliloquy from first to last is: action or inactivity? The specific act which Hamlet

[1] The question *why* Hamlet is certain that any attempt to kill the King will involve his own death is interesting. Shakespeare seems to have taken it for granted, for the necessity is not apparent in the play as we have it. The possible solutions are two: (1) psychological and subjective, namely, that Hamlet was a thoroughgoing pessimist; (2) "historical" and objective, namely, that in the old play, which very probably lies behind our *Hamlet*, the King was so strongly guarded that an attempt on his life was certain death to his assailant. Such at least are the conditions in the old forms of the legend. Of the two solutions we strongly incline to (2).

has to undertake—namely, the killing of the king—involves, Hamlet feels certain, his own death. From the horror of an after-life, he shrinks away.

It occurs to me that the word "conscience" in the line

> Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all

may have been largely responsible for the traditional misinterpretation of the speech. Conscience there means simply consciousness. But those who read it, as most men naturally would, in the modern sense of "moral scruple," could hardly help connecting the speech with Hamlet's first soliloquy (I, ii. 129):—

> O that this too too solid flesh would melt,
> Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!
> Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
> His canon 'gainst self-slaughter!

There, undeniably, the thought of suicide is in Hamlet's mind: but that is before he has seen the Ghost. After the Ghost has spoken to him, before he can think of death for himself, he must act and kill the king. In the "To be" soliloquy, there is nowhere any thought of suicide as a solution for Hamlet himself. Suicide enters solely as part of a general meditation upon death; and the whole argument of the soliloquy can be quite simply summarized.

"Shall I kill him or not? Which is nobler; to endure in silence, or to act and die? To die! If death were the end, I would die gladly. But if it is not the end—that is the fear that makes us endure our miseries. Who would bear them, if he knew he could make a final end by suicide? But the fear that there may be something after death, worse than the miseries we know, stays our hands. So, with this thought of what may follow death, our brave resolves grow pale, and our arduous enterprises, wherein death must be risked, dissolve before they become acts at all."

There is another point of interest in the speech, which has often been remarked, but from which the natural conclusions

are seldom drawn. Hamlet positively declares that from the bourn of death "no traveller returns." Yet the whole play depends upon the fact that Hamlet recognizes that one traveller at least *has* returned. The Hamlet of "To be or not to be" has done an incredible thing: he has forgotten the Ghost. It might be urged that immediately before he had been feeling doubtful about the Ghost.

> The spirit that I have seen
> May be the devil: and the devil hath power
> To assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps
> Out of my weakness and my melancholy
> Abuses me to damn me. (II, ii. 627.)

But to be doubtful of the Ghost's intentions and to deny his existence are different, *toto coelo*. Hamlet could not deny the Ghost; but Shakespeare could.

In other words, there is convincing internal evidence that Hamlet's meditation on death represents Shakespeare's own personal thinking. For a moment he utters himself not through a mask, but in person. That is interesting. It becomes more interesting still when we reflect on the nature of his thought. Annihilation—that were welcome; but the thought of something after death—that is intolerable.

Precisely the same meditation occurs in *Measure for Measure* (Act III), where it is divided between two characters—the Duke and Claudio. The Duke tries to reconcile Claudio to death, by insisting upon the miseries of life:

> The best of rest is sleep,
> And that thou oft provokest; yet grossly fear'st
> Thy death, which is no more.

Strange argument, one reflects, for a supposed friar to use. But it shows how completely alien the Catholic and orthodox view of life was to Shakespeare. He gives to a friar the argument of Hamlet— "To die: to sleep: No more." And for the moment he persuades Claudio thus to be absolute for death. "If I must die," says Claudio to Isabel,

I will encounter darkness as a bride
And hug it in my arms.

But when a ray of hope breaks through that darkness, when the bare possibility of life offers itself, the second theme of Hamlet's thought breaks down his resolution.

Claudio O Isabel!
Isabel What says my brother?
Claudio Death is a fearful thing.
Isabel And shamed life a hateful.
Claudio Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;
To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;
This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice;
To be imprisoned in the viewless winds
And blown with restless violence round about
The pendent world; or to be worse than worst
Of those that lawless and uncertain thought
Imagines howling: 'tis too horrible.
The weariest and most loathed worldly life
That age, ache, penury and imprisonment
Can lay on nature is a paradise
To what we fear of death.

What seems to me most remarkable about this meditation of Shakespeare's upon death is that it is almost totally alien to a modern mind. It is the prospect of annihilation, which Shakespeare at this period of his life so eagerly desired, that chills the modern man. The possibility that a future existence should be worse than this has been practically banished from men's minds. Yet it was precisely that possibility which weighed upon Shakespeare, as though out of Catholic orthodoxy he had rejected all thought of Heaven and retained only the thought of Hell. On any showing neither Hamlet nor Claudio were bad men: they had as good a right as most to a place in Paradise. But the thought of an after-life better than this one seems not to have existed at this time for Shakespeare: the alternatives were simply annihilation, or an after-life worse than this.

This attitude has completely changed. The spiritual revolution (for it is nothing less) is astonishing to contemplate. The horror of something after death about which Shakespeare's thought beat so wildly and despairingly at one moment in his life has softly and silently vanished away from the modern consciousness. Hell, for the modern mind, is here and now—in the blank and forlorn despair of an aimless universe. And, I do not think that, in this opinion, I am making the mistake of generalizing from the minds most familiar to my own; even in the straitest circles of Christian orthodoxy, even in the Roman Catholic Church itself, the old belief in Hell seems to have been mitigated almost to nothingness. There are profound traces of it, no doubt, in the work of an Irishman of Catholic education like Mr. James Joyce; but that, I imagine, is due to the peculiar backwardness of Catholic education in Ireland. I find no such traces in the literary work of continental Catholics. The terror of Hell beyond the grave has been overthrown; the horror of Hell on earth seems to have begun its reign.

This all but imperceptible revolution in man's instinctive thought is but one aspect of an even larger revolution in our beliefs concerning God. We are not afraid of God; what we are afraid of is that He does not exist. This is to put the case bluntly, in terms that are not really apt to the condition. The possibility of a personal God (in any non-casuistic sense of the word "personal") has disappeared from educated minds: they do not want a personal God, for the simple reason that to attribute to a person the conduct of the universe would be intolerable. That is not to say the universe is conducted damnably, but that it is conducted with a fine and complete disregard of our deepest and most personal feelings. We cannot possibly put the responsibility for it on to a person.

The educated modern man, therefore, does not want a personal God: for that would be to seek for a God in order to hate and despise him. What it wants, where it wants anything of this order at all, is an assurance that, in some sense or other, all is well. And such an assurance cannot be reached by reason.

It can be reached, I believe, and validly reached; but not by reason: unless a clear sight of the limitations of reason can reasonably be called reason. On the other hand, it cannot be reached by a denial of reason. Rather the method must be to push reason to the extremest extent of its power, and by so doing to realize how impotent it is to grasp the primary realities.

The universe of Shakespeare was always a universe without a personal God. He had a profound and delicate sympathy with the emotional side of Christianity; he carried on him pretty deep marks of the Catholic metaphysic. But, to speak broadly, in his early period he was too full of the lust of the eye and the pride of life to think about a personal God, and in his later periods he quite palpably disbelieved in such a thing. At one time, death filled his thought; but the main question which afflicted him was the question which afflicts us. Is the whole affair aimless or not? And I believe that he established to his own satisfaction that it was not.

The progress through Macbeth's—

> It is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing. . . .

through Edgar's—

> We must endure
> Our going hence, even as our coming hither:
> Ripeness is all.

to Prospero's—

> We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded by a sleep—

the progress, though indefinable, is palpable. That last utterance of Prospero cries to be related to Hamlet's soliloquy. It is no longer we who "sleep—perchance to dream"; we are the dreams of a great Sleeper. To some, to many, a thought so intangible and evanescent is empty and barren. I find it supremely satisfying; it says nothing, but it says nothing in such a tone that nothing becomes everything; it is the speech of silence.

Those who say more cheat themselves, and us if we listen to them; but only those seek to say more, who do not know how to say such things.

I think of Shakespeare much as I think of old Cephalus at the beginning of Plato's *Republic*, when he leaves the younger generation to their mighty debate; and I feel that since Shakespeare made way for others the debate has gone on for three centuries, yet none have gone so far as he. I think of our Clissolds, and they seem to me fussily futile in comparison; and, thinking of them, I can almost persuade myself that I understand why Shakespeare at the end was troubled so little even by the last infirmity of noble mind that it was left to the spontaneous piety of two fellow-actors to rescue more than half his work from the ruin of oblivion.

G. L. DICKINSON

Essayist, philosopher

Mr. Dickinson, son of Lowes Dickinson, the artist, was educated at Charterhouse and Cambridge. Philosophy has been the subject of his study and writings. His scholarship was rewarded by the presentation to him of the Otto Kahn Fellowship, which enabled him to travel in China, Japan, and India. He is now a lecturer at King's College, Cambridge. His *The Greek View of Life* is one of his most popular books.

"To write clearly means to think clearly. That is not easy, but can be taught and should be taught, since it concerns everybody in the ordinary business of life. The main point is to arrange your ideas in the right order, and connect your sentences rightly. This is difficult in English because there are so few connecting particles. Consequently much has to be done by getting the right emphasis on the right word; and that is a matter of arrangement of the words.

"Anything more than this is more difficult to teach, and is only of value for people who are going to be authors, poets, playwrights, etc. I am not sure that they can be taught anyway, though they can teach themselves, and will, if they have it in them. The foundation—having something to say and saying it clearly—is always necessary. But words, rhythms, and the like, which are the outer form of literature, can only be discovered by those who have the instinct and can profit by what other poets or prose writers have done."

—G. L. Dickinson.

THE GREEK VIEW OF LIFE

§ 6. Tragedy [1]

The character of Greek tragedy was determined from the very beginning by the fact of its connection with religion. The season at which it was performed was the festival of Dionysius; about his altar the chorus danced; and the object of the performance was the representation of scenes out of the lives of ancient heroes. The subject of the drama was thus strictly prescribed; it must be selected out of a cycle of legends familiar to the audience; and whatever freedom might be allowed to the poet in his treatment of the theme, whatever the reflections he might embroider upon it, the speculative or ethical views, the criticism of contemporary life, all must be subservient to the main object originally proposed, the setting forth, for edification as well as for delight, of some episodes in the lives of those heroes of the past who were considered not only to be greater than their descendants, but to be the sons of gods and worthy themselves of worship as divine.

By this fundamental condition the tragedy of the Greeks is distinguished sharply, on the one hand from the Shakespearian drama, on the other from the classical drama of the French. The tragedies of Shakespeare are devoid, one might say, or at least comparatively devoid, of all preconceptions. He was free to choose what subject he liked and to treat it as he would; and no sense of obligation to religious or other points of view, no feeling for traditions descended from a sacred past and not lightly to be handled by those who were their trustees for the future, sobered or restrained for evil or for good his half-barbaric genius. He flung himself upon life with the irresponsible ardour of the

[1] From *The Greek View of Life*, pp. 221–240. Reprinted by permission of Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., publishers.

discoverer of a new continent; shaped and re-shaped it as he chose, carved from it now the cynicism of *Measure for Measure*, now the despair of Hamlet and of Lear, now the radiant magnanimity of *The Tempest*, and departed leaving behind him not a map or chart, but a series of mutually incompatible landscapes.

What Shakespeare gave, in short, was a many-sided representation of life; what the Greek dramatist gave was an interpretation. But an interpretation not simply personal to himself, but representative of the national tradition and belief. The men whose deeds and passions he narrated were the patterns and examples on the one hand, on the other the warnings of his race; the gods who determined the fortunes they sang, were working still among men; the moral laws that ruled the past ruled the present too; and the history of the Hellenic race moved, under a visible providence, from its divine origin onward to an end that would be prosperous or the reverse according as later generations should continue to observe the worship and traditions of their fathers descended from heroes and gods.

And it is the fact that in this sense it was representative of the national consciousness, that distinguishes the Greek tragedy from the classical drama of the French. For the latter, though it imitated the ancients in outward form, was inspired with a totally different spirit. The kings and heroes whose fortunes it narrated were not the ancestors of the French race; they had no root in its affections, no connection with its religious beliefs, no relation to its ethical conceptions. The whole ideal set forth was not that which really inspired the nation, but at best that which was supposed to inspire the court; and the whole drama, like a tree transplanted to an alien soil, withers and dies for lack of the nourishment which the tragedy of the Greeks unconsciously imbibed from its encompassing air of national tradition.

Such, then, was the general character of the Greek tragedy—an interpretation of the national ideal. Let us now proceed to follow out some of the consequences involved in this conception.

In the first place, the theme represented is the life and fate

of ancient heroes—of personages, that is to say, greater than ordinary men, both for good and for evil, in their qualities and in their achievements, pregnant with fateful issues, makers or marrers of the fortunes of the world. Tragic and terrible their destiny may be, but never contemptible or squalid. Behind all suffering, behind sin and crime, must lie a redeeming magnanimity. A complete villain, says Aristotle, is not a tragic character, for he has no hold upon the sympathies; if he prosper, it is an outrage on common human feeling; if he fall into disaster, it is merely what he deserves. Neither is it admissible to represent the misfortunes of a thoroughly good man, for that is merely painful and distressing; and least of all is it tolerable gratuitously to introduce mere baseness, or madness, or other aberrations from human nature. The true tragic hero is a man of high place and birth who having a nature not ignoble has fallen into sin and pays in suffering the penalty of his act. Nothing could throw more light on the distinguishing characteristics of the Greek drama than these few remarks of Aristotle, and nothing could better indicate how close, in the Greek mind, was the connection between æsthetic and ethical judgments. The canon of Aristotle would exclude as proper themes for tragedy the character and fate, say, of Richard III.—the absolutely bad man suffering his appropriate desert; or of Kent and Cordelia—the absolutely good, brought into unmerited affliction; and that not merely because such themes offend the moral sense, but because by so offending they destroy the proper pleasure of the tragic art. The whole æsthetic effect is limited by ethical presuppositions; and to outrage these is to defeat the very purpose of tragedy.

Specially interesting in this connection are the strictures passed on Euripides in the passage of the *Frogs* of Aristophanes to which allusion has already been made. Euripides is there accused of lowering the tragic art by introducing—what? Women in love! The central theme of modern tragedy! It is the boast of Æschylus that there is not one of his plays which touches on this subject:

I never allow'd of your lewd Sthenoboeas
Or filthy detestable Phædras—not I!
Indeed I should doubt if my drama throughout
Exhibit an instance of woman in love! [1]

And there can be little doubt that with a Greek audience this would count to him as a merit, and that the shifting of the centre of interest by Euripides from the sterner passions of heroes and of kings to this tenderer phase of human feeling would be felt even by those whom it charmed to be a declension from the height of the older tragedy.

And to this limitation of subject corresponds a limitation of treatment. The Greek tragedy is composed from a definite point of view, with the aim not merely to represent but also to interpret the theme. Underlying the whole construction of the plot, the dialogue, the reflections, the lyric interludes, is the intention to illustrate some general moral law, some common and typical problem, some fundamental truth. Of the elder dramatists at any rate, Æschylus and Sophocles, one may even say that it was their purpose—however imperfectly achieved—to "justify the ways of God to man." To represent suffering as the punishment of sin is the constant bent of Æschylus; to justify the law of God against the presumption of man is the central idea of Sophocles. In either case the whole tone is essentially religious. To choose such a theme as Lear, to treat it as Shakespeare has treated it, to leave it, as it were, bleeding from a thousand wounds, in mute and helpless entreaty for the healing that is never to be vouchsafed—this would have been repulsive, if not impossible, to a Greek tragedian. Without ever descending from concrete art to the abstractions of mere moralizing, without ever attempting to substitute a verbal formula for the full and complex perception that grows out of a representation of life, the ancient dramatists were nevertheless, in the whole apprehension of their theme, determined by a more or less conscious speculative bias; the world to them was not merely a splendid chaos, it was a divine plan; and even in its

[1] Aristoph. *Frogs*, 1043.—Translated by Frere.

darkest hollows, its passes most perilous and bleak, they have their hand, though doubtful perhaps and faltering, upon the clue that is to lead them up to the open sky.

It is consonant with this account of the nature of Greek tragedy that it should have laid more stress upon action than upon character. The interest was centred on the universal bearing of certain acts and situations, on the light which the experience represented threw on the whole tendency and course of human life, not on the sentiments and motives of the particular personages introduced. The characters are broad and simple, not developing for the most part, but fixed, and fitted therefore to be the mediums of direct action, of simple issues, and typical situations. In the Greek tragedy the general point of view predominates over the idiosyncrasies of particular persons. It is human nature that is represented in the broad, not this or that highly specialized variation; and what we have indicated as the general aim, the interpretation of life, is never obscured by the predominance of exceptional and, so to speak, accidental characteristics. Man is the subject of the Greek drama; the subject of the modern novel is Tom and Dick.

Finally, to the realization of this general aim, the whole form of the Greek drama was admirably adapted. It consisted very largely of conversations between two persons, representing two opposed points of view, and giving occasion for an almost scientific discussion of every problem of action raised in the play; and between these conversations were inserted lyric odes in which the chorus commented on the situation, bestowed advice or warning, praise or blame, and finally summed up the moral of the whole. Through the chorus, in fact, the poet could speak in his own person, and impose upon the whole tragedy any tone which he desired. Periodically he could drop the dramatist and assume the preacher; and thus ensure that his play should be, what we have seen was its recognized ideal, not merely a representation but an interpretation of life.

But this without ceasing to be a work of art. In attempting to analyze in abstract terms the general character of the Greek

tragedy we have necessarily thrown into the shade what after all was its primary and most essential aspect; an aspect, however, of which a full appreciation could only be attained not by a mere perusal of the text, but by what is unfortunately for ever beyond our power, the witnessing of an actual representation as it was given on the Greek stage. For from a purely æsthetic point of view the Greek drama must be reckoned among the most perfect of art forms.

Taking place in the open air, on the sunny slope of a hill, valley and plain or islanded sea stretching away below to meet the blazing blue of a cloudless sky, the moving pageant, thus from the first set in tune with nature, brought to a focus of splendour the rays of every separate art. More akin to an opera than to a play, it had, as its basis, music. For the drama had developed out of the lyric ode, and retained throughout what was at first its only element, the dance and song of a mimetic chorus. By this centre of rhythmic motion and pregnant melody the burden of the tale was caught up and echoed and echoed again, as the living globe divided into spheres of answering song, the clear and precise significance of the plot, never obscure to the head, being thus brought home in music to the passion of the heart, the idea embodied in lyric verse, the verse transfigured by song, and song and verse reflected as in a mirror to the eye by the swing and beat of the limbs they stirred to consonance of motion. And while such was the character of the odes that broke the action of the play, the action itself was an appeal not less to the ear and to the eye than to the passion and the intellect. The circumstances of the representation, the huge auditorium in the open air, lent themselves less to "acting" in our sense of the term, than to attitude and declamation. The actors raised on high boots above their natural height, their faces hidden in masks and their tones mechanically magnified, must have relied for their effects not upon facial play, or rapid and subtle variations of voice and gesture, but upon a certain statuesque beauty of pose, and a chanting intonation of that majestic iambic verse whose measure would have been obscured by a rapid and con-

versational delivery. The representation would thus become moving sculpture to the eye, and to the ear, as it were, a sleep of music between the intenser interludes of the chorus; and the spectator without being drawn away by an imitative realism from the calm of impassioned contemplation into the fever and fret of a veritable actor on the scene, received an impression based throughout on that clear intellectual foundation, that almost prosaic lucidity of sentiment and plot, which is preserved to us in the written text, but raised by the accompanying appeal to the sense, made as it must have been made by such artists as the Greeks, by the grouping of forms and colours, the recitative, the dance and the song, to such a greatness and height of æsthetic significance as can hardly have been realized by any other form of art production.

The nearest modern analogy to what the ancient drama must have been is to be found probably in the operas of Wagner, who indeed was strongly influenced by the tragedy of the Greeks. It was his ideal, like theirs, to combine the various branches of art, employing not only music but poetry, sculpture, painting and the dance, for the representation of his dramatic theme; and his conception also to make art the interpreter of life, reflecting in a national drama the national consciousness, the highest action and the deepest passion and thought of the German race. To consider how far in this attempt he falls short of or goes beyond the achievement of the Greeks, and to examine the wide dissimilarities that underlie the general identity of aim, would be to wander too far afield from our present theme. But the comparison may be recommended to those who are anxious to form a concrete idea of what the effect of a Greek tragedy may have been, and to clothe in imagination the dead bones of the literary text with the flesh and blood of a representation to the sense.

Meantime, to assist the reader to realize with somewhat greater precision the bearing of the foregoing remarks, it may be worth while to give an outline sketch of one of the most celebrated of the Greek tragedies, the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus.

The hero of the drama belongs to that heroic house whose tragic history was among the most terrible and the most familiar to a Greek audience. Tantalus, the founder of the family, for some offence against the gods, was suffering in Hades the punishment which is christened by his name. His son Pelops was stained with the blood of Myrtilus. Of the two sons of the next generation, Thyestes seduced the wife of his brother Atreus; and Atreus in return killed the sons of Thyestes, and made the father unwittingly eat the flesh of the murdered boys. Agamemnon, son of Atreus, to propitiate Artemis, sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia, and in revenge was murdered by Clytemnestra, his wife. And Clytemnestra was killed by Orestes, her son, in atonement for the death of Agamemnon. For generations the race had been dogged by crime and punishment; and in choosing for his theme the murder of Agamemnon the dramatist could assume in his audience so close a familiarity with the past history of the House that he could call into existence by an allusive word that sombre background of woe to enhance the terrors of his actual presentation. The figures he brought into vivid relief joined hands with menacing forms that faded away into the night of the future and the past; while above them hung, intoning doom, the phantom host of Furies.

Yet at the outset of the drama all promises well. The watchman on the roof of the palace, in the tenth year of his watch, catches sight at last of the signal fire that announces the capture of Troy and the speedy return of Agamemnon. With joy he proclaims to the House the long-delayed and welcome news; yet even in the moment of exultation lets slip a doubtful phrase hinting at something behind, which he dares not name, something which may turn to despair the triumph of victory. Hereupon enter the chorus of Argive elders, chanting as they move to the measure of a stately march. They sing how ten years before Agamemnon and Menelaus had led forth the host of Greece, at the bidding of the Zeus who protects hospitality, to recover for Menelaus Helen his wife, treacherously stolen by Paris. Then, as they take their places and begin their rhythmic

dance, in a strain of impassioned verse that is at once a narrative and a lyric hymn, they tell, or rather, present in a series of vivid images, flashing as by illumination of lightning out of a night of veiled and sombre boding, the tale of the deed that darkened the starting of the host—the sacrifice of Iphigenia to the goddess whose wrath was delaying the fleet at Aulis. In verse, in music, in pantomime, the scene lives again—the struggle in the father's heart, the insistence of his brother chiefs, the piteous glance of the girl, and at last the unutterable end; while above and through it all rings like a knell of fate the refrain that is the motive of the whole drama:

"Sing woe, sing woe, but may the Good prevail."

At the conclusion of the ode enters Clytemnestra. She makes a formal announcement to the chorus of the fall of Troy; describes the course of the signal-fire from beacon to beacon as it sped, and pictures in imagination the scenes even then taking place in the doomed city. On her withdrawal the chorus break once more into song and dance. To the music of a solemn hymn they point the moral of the fall of Troy, the certain doom of violence and fraud descended upon Paris and his House. Once more the vivid pictures flash from the night of woe—Helen in her fatal beauty stepping lightly to her doom, the widower's nights of mourning haunted by the ghost of love, the horrors of the war that followed, the slain abroad and the mourners at home, the change of living flesh and blood for the dust and ashes of the tomb. At last with a return to their original theme, the doom of insolence, the chorus close their ode and announce the arrival of a messenger from Troy. Talthybius, the herald, enters as spokesman of the army and King, describing the hardships they have suffered and the joy of the triumphant issue. To him Clytemnestra announces, in words of which the irony is patent to the audience, her sufferings in the absence of her husband and her delight at the prospect of his return. He will find her, she says, as he left her, a faithful watcher of the home, her loyalty sure, her honour undefiled. Then follows another choral

ode, similar in theme to the last, dwelling on the woe brought by the act of Paris upon Troy, the change of the bridal song to the trump of war and the dirge of death; contrasting, in a profusion of splendid tropes, the beauty of Helen with the curse to which it is bound; and insisting once more on the doom that attends insolence and pride. At the conclusion of this song the measure changes to a march, and the chorus turn to welcome the triumphant king. Agamemnon enters, and behind him the veiled and silent figure of a woman. After greeting the gods of his House, the King, in brief and stilted phrase, acknowledges the loyalty of the chorus, but hints at much that is amiss which it must be his first charge to set right. Hereupon enters Clytemnestra, and in a speech of rhetorical exaggeration tells of her anxious waiting for her lord and her inexpressible joy at his return. In conclusion she directs that purple cloth be spread upon his path that he may enter the house as befits a conqueror. After a show of resistance, Agamemnon yields the point, and the contrast at which the dramatist aims is achieved. With the pomp of an eastern monarch, always repellent to the Greek mind, the King steps across the threshold, steps, as the audience knows, to his death. The higher the reach of his power and pride the more terrible and swift is the nemesis; and Clytemnestra follows in triumph with the enigmatic cry upon her lips: "Zeus, who art god of fulfilment, fulfil my prayers." As she withdraws the chorus begin a song of boding fear, the more terrible that it is still indefinite. Something is going to happen—the presentiment is sure. But what, but what? They search the night in vain. Meantime, motionless and silent, waits the figure of the veiled woman. It is Cassandra, the prophetess, daughter of Priam of Troy, whom Agamemnon has carried home as his prize. Clytemnestra returns to urge her to enter the house; she makes no sign and utters no word. The Queen changes her tone from courtesy to anger and rebuke; the figure neither stirs nor speaks; and Clytemnestra at last with an angry threat leaves her and returns to the palace. Then, and not till then, a cry breaks from the stranger's lips, a passionate cry to Apollo who gave

her her fatal gift. All the sombre history of the House to which she has been brought, the woe that has been and the woe that is to come, passes in pictures across her inner sense. In a series of broken ejaculations, not sentences but lyric cries, she evokes the scenes of the past and of the future. Blood drips from the palace; in its chambers the Furies crouch; the murdered sons of Thyestes wail in its haunted courts; and ever among the visions of the past that one of the future floats and fades, clearly discerned, impossible to avert, the murder of a husband by a wife; and in the rear of that, most pitiful of all, the violent death of the seer who sees in vain and may not help. Between Cassandra and the Chorus it is a duet of anguish and fear; in the broken lyric phrases a phantom music wails; till at last, at what seems the breaking-point, the tension is relaxed, and dropping into the calmer iambic recitative, Cassandra tells her message in plainer speech and clearly proclaims the murder of the King. Then, with a last appeal to the avenger that is to come, she enters the palace alone to meet her death.—The stage is empty. Suddenly a cry is heard from within; again, and then again; while the chorus hesitate the deed is done; the doors are thrown open, and Clytemnestra is seen standing over the corpses of her victims. All disguise is now thrown off; the murderess avows and triumphs in her deed; she justifies it as vengeance for the sacrifice of Iphigenia, and sees in herself not a free human agent but the incarnate curse of the House of Tantalus. And now for the first time appears the adulterer Ægisthus, who has planned the whole behind the scenes. He too is an avenger, for he is the son of that Thyestes who was made to feed on his own children's flesh. The murder of Agamemnon is but one more link in the long chain of hereditary guilt; and with that exposition of the pitiless law of punishment and crime this chapter of the great drama comes to a close. But the *Agamemnon* is only the first of a series of three plays closely connected and meant to be performed in succession; and the problem raised in the first of them, the crime that cries for punishment and the punishment that is itself a new crime, is solved in the last by a

reconciliation of the powers of heaven and hell, and the pardon of the last offender in the person of Orestes. To sketch, however, the plan of the other dramas of the triology would be to trespass too far upon our space and time. It is enough to have illustrated, by the example of the *Agamemnon* the general character of a Greek tragedy, and those who care to pursue the subject further must be referred to the text of the plays themselves.

§ 7. Comedy

Even more remarkable than the tragedy of the Greeks, in its rendering of a didactic intention under the forms of a free and spontaneous art, is the older comedy known to us through the works of Aristophanes. As the former dealt with the general conceptions, religious and ethical, that underlay the Greek view of life, using as its medium of exposition the ancient national myths, so the latter dealt with the particular phases of contemporary life, employing the machinery of a free burlesque. The achievement of Aristophanes, in fact, is more astonishing, in a sense, than that of Æschylus. Starting with what is always, *prima facie*, the prose of everyday life, its acrid controversies, its vulgar and tedious types, and even its particular individuals —for Aristophanes does not hesitate to introduce his contemporaries in person on the stage—he fits to this gross and heavy stuff the wings of imagination, scatters from it the clinging mists of banality and spite, and speeds it forth through the lucid heaven of art amid peals of musical laughter and snatches of lyric song. For Aristophanes was a poet as well as a comedian, and his genius is displayed not only in the construction of his fantastic plots, not only in the inexhaustible profusion of his humane and genial wit, but in bursts of pure poetry as melodious and inspired as ever sprang from the lips of the lyrists of Greece or of the world. The basis of the comic as of the tragic art of the Greeks was song and dance; and the chorus, the original element of the play, still retains in the works of Aristophanes a place important enough to make it clear that in comedy, too, a prominent aspect of the art must have been the æsthetic ap-

peal to the ear and the eye. In general structure, in fact, comedy and tragedy were alike; æsthetically the motives were similar, only they were set in a different key.

But while primarily Aristophanes, like the tragedians, was a great artist, he was also, like them, a great interpreter of life. His dramas are satires as well as poems, and he was and expressed himself supremely conscious of having a "mission" to fulfil. "He has scorned from the first," he makes the chorus sing of himself in the *Peace*:

> He has scorned from the first to descend and to dip
> Peddling and meddling in private affairs:
> To detect and collect every petty defect
> Of husband and wife and domestical life;
> But intrepid and bold, like Alcides of old,
> When the rest stood aloof, put himself to the proof
> In his country's behoof. [1]

His aim, in fact, was deliberately to instruct his countrymen in political and social issues; to attack the abuses of the Assembly, of the Law-courts and the home; to punish demagogues, charlatans, professional politicians; to laugh back into their senses "revolting" sons and wives; to defend the orthodox faith against philosophers and men of science. These are the themes that he embodies in his plots, and these the morals that he enforces when he speaks through the chorus in his own person. And the result is an art-product more strange to the modern mind in its union of poetry with prose, of æsthetic with didactic significance, than even that marvellous creation, the Greek tragedy. Of the character of this comedy the reader may form an idea through the admirable and easily accessible translations of Frere;[2] and we are therefore dispensed from the obligation to attempt, as in the case of tragedy, an account of some particular specimen of the art.

[1] Aristoph. *Peace*, 751, *seq.*—Translated by Frere.
[2] In Morley's Universal Library.

ON BIOGRAPHY:

GAMALIEL BRADFORD

Essayist

Mr. Bradford, man of letters since 1886, has specialized in the art of writing short biographical portraits, which make characters of history live again. Let him speak about his own career as an author:

"First as to specimens of biographical writing from my own work. I think that I should select the portrait of Emily Dickinson in *Portraits of American Women* or that of General Stuart in *Confederate Portraits* or Aaron Burr in *Damaged Souls*, as perhaps the best things I have done in greatly different lines. In *Bare Souls* and *Wives*, Voltaire and Theodosia Burr are perhaps quite as good as the others mentioned.

"With regard to more general points of writing, I think we may select a determined persistence as almost the first requisite, assuming of course a certain measure of ability to go with it. It is those who have the courage to meet all difficulties, to bear all slights and rebuffs, to carry out their purposes in the face of innumerable obstacles and set-backs who succeed. I can only say in my own case that I began to make a business of writing forty years ago and that as I look back, it seems as if I had met failure after failure and for a long time nothing else. I began with

poetry and it took me years to learn that in practically every case poetry as a means of material success and livelihood is quite hopeless. Then I turned to fiction and I have today eight novels, three of which have been published, with only moderate success, while the other five are waiting peacefully in manuscript for their turn to astonish the world. I believe in them, but apparently no one else does.

"And for nearly forty years I have been writing plays, and I have the manuscripts of some fifteen completed, and only one is in print, and after the most desperate and prolonged efforts I have never been able to get a single one on to the stage.

"Then twenty years ago, after a long period of utter discouragement and as it seemed final abandonment of literary labor altogether, I literally stumbled into the line of biographical work and made a success which, if in no way remarkable, has been more of an astonishment to me than anyone else. I should prefer to write great novels; but we do what we can, not what we should like.

"I have gone into this perhaps rather egotistical disquisition to support my point that a tremendous and undying persistence is at least a very important part of the writer's equipment. I don't know that I have much else to boast of, but I think I have that.

"As regards the technique, I think the first requisite is not to think about writing as such at all, but to be enormously, profoundly penetrated with your subject. If you have a normal gift and supply of words—and if you haven't, no training will create it for you—a subject in which you are intensely absorbed and interested will make the words pour out of you in a flood, rich, varied, and abundant. It makes very little difference what the subject

is. Let it be *your* subject, let it take hold of you to the bottom, and your work is practically done for you.

"Only, in the point of the detail of style, of course there is a good deal to be done negatively, and I think the most important thing is to make it a life business to get rid of *clichés*, of the conventionalities of journalistic commonplace, those deadly worn counters of phrase that circulate with all of us like dirty dollar bills, and which creep in when we are unaware and take the color and the life out of the best possible writing. Probably I am myself a commonplace creature—I fear I am— but I have been fighting these commonplaces all my literary life, and I have not succeeded in eradicating them yet.

"In regard to authors who are to be patterns, I should say most emphatically avoid having any. Some people go so far as to dissuade a would-be author altogether from reading. I think this absurd and my creed and principle is precisely the opposite. I believe in wide and vast reading. But, and here is the point, the reading should be in the most varied lines and from the most different points of view. The worst thing that can happen to a young writer is to idolize any one particular author and model himself upon him. Read all sorts of authors and in all sorts of schools. Form an opinion of your *own* as to the merits and defects of these authors and schools, or what appear to you such, and deduce from this all you can for your own benefit. Do not be entrapped into following blindly any professor or any school or any critic. Keep an open mind, and what is even more important, an open soul, so that all the winds of the spiritual heaven may blow through it."

—Gamaliel Bradford.

THE HAUNTED BIOGRAPHER (DIALOGUES OF THE DEAD)[1]

Abraham Lincoln

I

(*Lincoln, Mark Twain, Charles Lamb, in the Forest of Arden.*)

Mark. Think of his grouping us together!

Lincoln. Well, why not? I would group with anybody that was willing.

Lamb. And yet I like rather better grouping alone, or with the flowing thousands in the London streets.

Lincoln. Oh, but you like it here with us, Charles.

Lamb. Here with you. But where is Touchstone, to make it complete?

Mark. And where is he himself, to make it completer—too complete? And still I come back to the absurdity of his grouping us together, and then being insane enough to think that he can make us talk. Imagine anybody in the world except ourselves—and possibly Shakespeare—thinking that he could make us talk.

Lincoln. Yet I think he is right in saying that we have a lot in common beyond what we have with all men. Laughter—we all know something about it.

Mark. Does he?

Lamb. Come, come, yes he does. He doesn't practice it so often as we do. There is that weight on his spirits. But I have a weight on my spirits too often, and so have you, Mark, and as for Mr. President Lincoln here—

Lincoln. Oh, God, Charles, don't!

[1] Reprinted from *University of Washington Chapbooks*, No. 10, Seattle, 1927, by permission of the author and publishers.

Lamb. Well, Father Abraham, then. We all know about the weight on his spirits, yet who laughed more madly? For the weight gets to be fantastic when it is too heavy.

Lincoln. And he knows all about that, Mark, you know he does.

Mark. I suppose so. All the same, I think it queer that he should group us together, and undertake to make us talk—in the Forest of Arden.

Lamb. Could there be a better place?

2

(*Lincoln, William Shakespeare, strolling through the Stratford meadows.*)

Shakespeare. Curious, isn't it? We are both such great men and so different!

Lincoln. Perhaps you exaggerate, so far as I am concerned. Circumstances just took me up and tossed me about, and planted me on the top. I have always felt that that was all.

Shakespeare. No, Abe, between you and me, there should be none of those disguises. I might say, just as you do, that it was a matter of circumstance. But I really think that I was born great, and I think that you were.

Lincoln. It may be so, it may be so. But are others born little? And I so often feel myself so immensely like the others.

Shakespeare. You can't feel more like them than I did. But somewhere, somehow, there must have been just a little something.—Still melancholy, Abe? Like my own Jaques, you seem to suck melancholy from everything—melancholy or fun, even from songs.

Lincoln. Most of all from songs, especially from the serene, pervading, magnificent splendor of yours. But I am sure you knew the melancholy, too, Will, every bit as much as Jaques and I.

Shakespeare. Perhaps, perhaps. Those who are born different always know it, I think, and for that matter, most of those who

are born the same. As you say, songs can breed it and nurse it; but, oh, Abe, there is nothing like the magic of songs to whiff it away.

Lincoln. Do you know, I sometimes believe I should have done better to make songs. Could you have dealt with men, Will?

Shakespeare. I don't know. I sometimes thought I could; but not as you did, not as you did, not with your superb gift. And that is chiefly what makes us melancholy, the thought of what we should like to do and could not.

3

(*D. L. Moody manages an interview with Lincoln, in the early sixties.*)

Moody. Mr. President, are you a Christian?

Lincoln. I wonder.

Moody. You wonder? No man should wonder about a thing like that; he should know.

Lincoln. Exactly: I wish I did.

Moody. Don't you believe the Bible?

Lincoln. The Bible, an excellent book. I often read it and recommend it.

Moody. I'm glad to hear that. But I'm surprised that it hasn't made you a Christian long ago.

Lincoln. It is just possible that it has.

Moody. No. If it had, you would know it. Don't you believe that Christ was the son of God?

Lincoln. If you like. I am willing to believe that I am the son of God—and you.

Moody. Now, Mr. President, you blaspheme.

Lincoln. I suppose I could have you shot for that.

Moody. I am not afraid. Besides, I know you won't. And I repeat, you blaspheme.

Lincoln. I am not sure that you do not, though that is a very ugly word.

Moody. I couldn't blaspheme.

Lincoln. It is a fine thing for a man to be aware of his limitations.

Moody. Oh, Mr. President, you will not take me seriously.

Lincoln. Good God, man, there are fifty million people wanting me to take them seriously. Think what would happen to me if I did.

Moody. But I should so like to make you a Christian.

Lincoln. That's awfully good of you. But really I haven't time: you know I have this blessed Union to patch up.

4

(*Lincoln, with his immense compassion, gets a special permit to visit John Wilkes Booth in the lower regions.*)

Lincoln. Ah, ha, John. Aren't you sorry now?

Booth. Sorry? Didn't I do you a service?

Lincoln. Me? Oh, yes. But aren't you sorry for yourself?

Booth. Why should I be?

Lincoln. You have to stay down here.

Booth. Is there so very much difference?

Lincoln. Well, no, I confess there isn't. And, John, those people up there don't know a joke, and they are so painfully decorous. You know the stories I like to tell. They don't take. I am inclined to think I shall pass the winter months down here—just for the change.

Booth. But about that service?

Lincoln. That you did me? I don't deny it, John. You did do me a service every way. In the first place, I was tired, oh, I was tired, dog-tired. Until the thing was over, I didn't know how tired I was. Every nerve in my soul was weary. It was good to get out of it.

Booth. And then I made your reputation—or saved it.

Lincoln. Saved it, saved it, John. I made it myself. But I don't know but the saving goes further. The smoke of your pistol blew a halo around me, I confess. Without that, God knows, how it would all have ended. It might have ended here. If that poor Woodrow Wilson had had someone to do for him

what you did for me, he might have counted in history—as I do. That's why I want to do something for you, John.

Booth. Can't you explain it to God Almighty?

Lincoln. To tell you the truth, John, I find him a little, what shall I say, impervious? That's what it is, impervious. I never was.

HAMLIN GARLAND

Novelist, short-story writer

Mr. Garland, the real son of the middle border, is important in American letters for what he has contributed not only of artistic value but also of historical significance. Mr. Garland was born in Wisconsin in 1860 at a time when the Middle West still retained the atmosphere of the prairie and the frontier. Consequently his "novels" of frontier life take on a distinctly autobiographical and historical flavor. His *Son of the Middle Border* is a continuation of the Middle Western life as it concerns himself but more particularly the next generation and the passing of the Middle Western frontier. His daughter, Constance, has caught the spirit of these books in her illustrations for them, as his daughter, Mary Isabel, has caught it in her living interpretations of his characters which she gives as she accompanies her father on his lecture tours.

"For forty-five years I have made it a habit to rise early and go at once to my desk. In my experience the morning hours are of more value to me, in a creative way, than all the other hours of the day. For many years I was able to keep to my task from seven to twelve but this period of concentration gradually lessened so that three hours is all the time I can now employ in actual composition. Of late years I find my best hours are from six to nine, or at best six to ten. I write with a broad-pointed pen rewriting and revising endlessly. I never use the type-writer except to copy my tangled manuscript. Some pages of *A Son of the Middle Border* were revised ten times. I have grown more

My Boyhood life was so so nearly finished that I felt free to begin a work of long carry meditated I began to dictate to my stenographer a rough outline of the life I had led as a boy in Wisconsin and Iowa. "If I should happen not to return from this long trip into the British Northwest", I said to some of my friends." I want to leave a fairly full and accurate chronicle of my youth." Each morning was spent at the task. In my walks about the suburbs of Westchester in the Berkshires, I was constantly reminded of scenes of long ago. The keen frosty wind; the purple evening shapes; the frogs signing to Orion - all had spiritual refreshment clearing my brain of library dust and drowsy ink. The rumors of war)

The manuscript I thus produced was rough and shapeless but it contained many of the essentials of our pioneer life, and I pushed ahead as rapidly as possible.

(This was the beginning of A Son of the Middle Border. March 1898.)

Hamlin Garland

Hollywood Calif.
Feb 24-1929

Facsimile of a page of manuscript from Hamlin Garland.

and more critical of my composition and my editors can scarcely drag in the proofsheets from my reluctant hands.

"In general my theory of style is very simple. It should take its form and color from the subject matter and should be as pellucid as a pane of glass, something which does not trouble the reader or distort the object. I strive for clarity, precision and the color and rhythm appropriate to the subject matter. In the use of punctuation I have but one rule; use only so many characters as are necessary to prevent a misunderstanding of the text. I bear in mind the sound of my sentences when read aloud. This aids me in securing precision and clarity, and tends to cut out tiresome repetitions of words. In short, words are not a means of concealing thought but of revealing my concept whatever it may be. If it is worth writing at all it is worth making plain to the reader."

—Hamlin Garland.

OUR FIRST WINTER ON THE PRAIRIE[1]

For a few days my brother and I had little to do other than to keep the cattle from straying, and we used our leisure in becoming acquainted with the region round about.

It burned deep into our memories, this wide, sunny, windy country. The sky so big, and the horizon line so low and so far away, made this new world of the plain more majestic than the world of the Coulee.—The grasses and many of the flowers were also new to us. On the uplands the herbage was short and dry and the plants stiff and woody, but in the swales the wild oat shook its quivers of barbed and twisted arrows, and the crow's foot, tall and sere, bowed softly under the feet of the wind, while everywhere, in the lowlands as well as on the ridges, the bleaching white antlers of by-gone herbivora lay scattered, testifying to "the herds of deer and buffalo" which once fed there. We were just a few years too late to see them.

To the south the sections were nearly all settled upon, for in that direction lay the county town, but to the north and on into Minnesota, rolled the unplowed sod, the feeding ground of the cattle, the home of foxes and wolves, and to the west, just beyond the highest ridges, we loved to think the bison might still be seen.

The cabin on this rented farm was a mere shanty, a shell of pine boards, which needed re-enforcing to make it habitable and one day my father said, "Well, Hamlin, I guess you'll have to run the plow-team this fall. I must help neighbor Button wall up the house and I can't afford to hire another man."

This seemed a fine commission for a lad of ten, and I drove my horses into the field that first morning with a manly pride

[1] From *A Son of the Middle Border*, chap. IX. Copyright by The Macmillan Company.

which added an inch to my stature. I took my initial "round" at a "land" which stretched from one side of the quarter section to the other, in confident mood. I was grown up!

But alas! my sense of elation did not last long. To guide a team for a few minutes as an experiment was one thing—to plow all day like a hired hand was another. It was not a chore, it was a job. It meant moving to and fro hour after hour, day after day, with no one to talk to but the horses. It meant trudging eight or nine miles in the forenoon and as many more in the afternoon, with less than an hour off at noon. It meant dragging the heavy implement around the corners, and it meant also many ship-wrecks, for the thick, wet stubble matted with wild buckwheat often rolled up between the coulter and the standard and threw the share completely out of the ground, making it necessary for me to halt the team and jerk the heavy plow backward for a new start.

Although strong and active I was rather short, even for a ten-year-old, and to reach the plow handles I was obliged to lift my hands above my shoulders; and so with the guiding lines crossed over my back and my worn straw hat bobbing just above the cross-brace I must have made a comical figure. At any rate nothing like it had been seen in the neighborhood and the people on the road to town looking across the field laughed and called to me, and neighbor Button said to my father in my hearing, "That chap's too young to run a plow," a judgment which pleased and flattered me greatly.

Harriet cheered me by running out occasionally to meet me as I turned the nearest corner, and sometimes Frank consented to go all the way around, chatting breathlessly as he trotted along behind. At other times he was prevailed upon to bring to me a cookie and a glass of milk, a deed which helped to shorten the forenoon. And yet, notwithstanding all these ameliorations, plowing became tedious.

The flies were savage, especially in the middle of the day, and the horses, tortured by their lances, drove badly, twisting and turning in their despairing rage. Their tails were continually

getting over the lines, and in stopping to kick their tormentors from their bellies they often got astride the traces, and in other ways made trouble for me. Only in the early morning or when the sun sank low at night were they able to move quietly along their ways.

The soil was the kind my father had been seeking, a smooth dark sandy loam, which made it possible for a lad to do the work of a man. Often the share would go the entire "round" without striking a root or a pebble as big as a walnut, the steel running steadily with a crisp craunching ripping sound which I rather liked to hear. In truth work would have been quite tolerable had it not been so long drawn out. Ten hours of it even on a fine day made about twice too many for a boy.

Meanwhile I cheered myself in every imaginable way. I whistled. I sang. I studied the clouds. I gnawed the beautiful red skin from the seed vessels which hung upon the wild rose bushes, and I counted the prairie chickens as they began to come together in winter flocks running through the stubble in search of food. I stopped now and again to examine the lizards unhoused by the share, tormenting them to make them sweat their milky drops (they were curiously repulsive to me), and I measured the little granaries of wheat which the mice and gophers had deposited deep under the ground, storehouses which the plow had violated. My eyes dwelt enviously upon the sailing hawk, and on the passing of ducks. The occasional shadowy figure of a prairie wolf made me wish for Uncle David and his rifle.

On certain days nothing could cheer me. When the bitter wind blew from the north, and the sky was filled with wild geese racing southward, with swiftly-hurrying clouds, winter seemed about to spring upon me. The horses' tails streamed in the wind. Flurries of snow covered me with clinging flakes, and the mud "gummed" my boots and trouser legs, clogging my steps. At such times I suffered from cold and loneliness—all sense of being a man evaporated. I was just a little boy, longing for the leisure of boyhood.

Day after day, through the month of October and deep into November, I followed that team, turning over two acres of stubble each day. I would not believe this without proof, but it is true! At last it grew so cold that in the early morning everything was white with frost and I was obliged to put one hand in my pocket to keep it warm, while holding the plow with the other, but I didn't mind this so much, for it hinted at the close of autumn. I've no doubt facing the wind in this way was excellent discipline, but I didn't think it necessary then and my heart was sometimes bitter and rebellious.

The soldier did not intend to be severe. As he had always been an early riser and a busy toiler it seemed perfectly natural and good discipline, that his sons should also plow and husk corn at ten years of age. He often told of beginning life as a "bound boy" at nine, and these stories helped me to perform my own tasks without whining. I feared to voice my weakness.

At last there came a morning when by striking my heel upon the ground I convinced my boss that the soil was frozen too deep for the mold-board to break. "All right," he said, "you may lay off this forenoon."

Oh, those beautiful hours of respite! With time to play or read I usually read, devouring anything I could lay my hands upon. Newspapers, whether old or new, or pasted on the wall or piled up in the attic,—anything in print was wonderful to me. One enthralling book, borrowed from Neighbor Button, was *The Female Spy*, a Tale of the Rebellion. Another treasure was a story called *Cast Ashore*, but this volume unfortunately was badly torn and fifty pages were missing so that I never knew, and do not know to this day, how those indomitable shipwrecked seamen reached their English homes. I dimly recall that one man carried a pet monkey on his back and that they all lived on "Bustards."

Finally the day came when the ground rang like iron under the feet of the horses, and a bitter wind, raw and gusty, swept out of the northwest, bearing gray veils of sleet. Winter had come! Work in the furrow had ended. The plow was brought

in, cleaned and greased to prevent its rusting, and while the horses munched their hay in well-earned holiday, father and I helped farmer Button husk the last of his corn.

Osman Button, a quaint and interesting man of middle age, was a native of York State and retained many of the traditions of his old home strangely blent with a store of vivid memories of Colorado, Utah and California, for he had been one of the gold-seekers of the early fifties. He loved to spin yarns of "When I was in gold camps," and he spun them well. He was short and bent and spoke in a low voice with a curious nervous sniff, but his diction was notably precise and clear. He was a man of judgment, and a citizen of weight and influence. From O. Button I got my first definite notion of Bret Harte's country, and of the long journey which they of the ox team had made in search of Eldorado.

His family "mostly boys and girls" was large, yet they all lived in a low limestone house which he had built (he said) to serve as a granary till he should find time to erect a suitable dwelling. In order to make the point dramatic, I will say that he was still living in the "granary" when last I called on him thirty years later!

A warm friendship sprang up between him and my father, and he was often at our house but his gaunt and silent wife seldom accompanied him. She was kindly and hospitable, but a great sufferer. She never laughed, and seldom smiled, and so remains a pathetic figure in all my memories of the household.

The younger Button children, Eva and Cyrus, became our companions in certain of our activities, but as they were both very sedate and slow of motion, they seldom joined us in our livelier sports. They were both much older than their years. Cyrus at this time was almost as venerable as his father, although his years were, I suppose, about seventeen. Albert and Lavinia, we heard, were much given to dancing and parties.

One night as we were all seated around the kerosene lamp my father said, "Well, Belle, I suppose we'll have to take these young ones down to town and fit 'em out for school." These

words so calmly uttered filled our minds with visions of new boots, new caps and new books, and though we went obediently to bed we hardly slept, so excited were we, and at breakfast next morning not one of us could think of food. All our desires converged upon the wondrous expedition—our first visit to town.

Our only carriage was still the lumber wagon but it had now two spring seats, one for father, mother and Jessie, and one for Harriet, Frank and myself. No one else had anything better, hence we had no sense of being poorly out-fitted. We drove away across the frosty prairie toward Osage—moderately comfortable and perfectly happy.

Osage was only a little town, a village of perhaps twelve hundred inhabitants, but to me as we drove down its Main Street, it was almost as impressive as LaCrosse had been. Frank clung close to father, and mother led Jessie, leaving Harriet and me to stumble over nail-kegs and dodge whiffle trees what time our eyes absorbed jars of pink and white candy, and sought out boots and buckskin mittens. Whenever Harriet spoke she whispered, and we pointed at each shining object with cautious care.—Oh! the marvellous exotic smells! Odors of salt codfish and spices, calico and kerosene, apples and gingersnaps mingle in my mind as I write.

Each of us soon carried a candy marble in his or her cheek (as a chipmunk carries a nut) and Frank and I stood like sturdy hitching posts whilst the storekeeper with heavy hands screwed cotton-plush caps upon our heads,—but the most exciting moment, the crowning joy of the day, came with the buying of our new boots.—If only father had not insisted on our taking those which were a size too large for us!

They were real boots. No one but a Congressman wore "gaiters" in those days. War fashions still dominated the shoe-shops, and high-topped cavalry boots were all but universal. They were kept in boxes under the counter or ranged in rows on a shelf and were of all weights and degrees of fineness. The ones I selected had red tops with a golden moon in the

center but my brother's taste ran to blue tops decorated with a golden flag. Oh! that deliciously oily *new* smell! My heart glowed every time I looked at mine. I was especially pleased because they did *not* have copper toes. Copper toes belonged to little boys. A youth who had plowed seventy acres of land could not reasonably be expected to dress like a child.—How smooth and delightfully stiff they felt on my feet.

Then came our new books, a McGuffey reader, a Mitchell geography, a Ray's arithmetic, and a slate. The books had a delightful new smell also, and there was singular charm in the smooth surface of the unmarked slates. I was eager to carve my name in the frame. At last with our treasures under the seat (so near that we could feel them), with our slates and books in our laps we jolted home, dreaming of school and snow. To wade in the drifts with our fine high-topped boots was now our desire.

It is strange but I cannot recall how my mother looked on this trip. Even my father's image is faint and vague (I remember only his keen eagle-gray terrifying eyes), but I can see every acre of that rented farm. I can tell you exactly how the house looked. It was an unpainted square cottage and stood bare on the sod at the edge of Dry Run ravine. It had a small lean-to on the eastern side and a sitting room and bedroom below. Overhead was a low unplastered chamber in which we children slept. As it grew too cold to use the summer kitchen we cooked, ate and lived in the square room which occupied the entire front of the two story upright, and which was, I suppose, sixteen feet square. As our attic was warmed only by the stove-pipe, we older children of a frosty morning made extremely simple and hurried toilets. On very cold days we hurried down stairs to dress beside the kitchen fire.

Our furniture was of the rudest sort. I cannot recall a single piece in our house or in our neighbors' houses that had either beauty or distinction. It was all cheap and worn, for this was the middle border, and nearly all our neighbors had moved as we had done in covered wagons. Farms were new, houses were

mere shanties, and money was scarce. "War times" and "war prices" were only just beginning to change. Our clothing was all cheap and ill fitting. The women and children wore home-made "cotton flannel" underclothing for the most part, and the men wore rough, ready-made suits over which they drew brown denim blouses or overalls to keep them clean.

Father owned a fine buffalo overcoat (so much of his song's promise was redeemed) and we possessed two buffalo robes for use in our winter sleigh, but mother had only a sad coat and a woolen shawl. How she kept warm I cannot now understand—I think she stayed at home on cold days.

All of the boys wore long trousers, and even my eight year old brother looked like a miniature man with his full-length overalls, high-topped boots and real suspenders. As for me I carried a bandanna in my hip pocket and walked with determined masculine stride.

My mother, like all her brothers and sisters, was musical and played the violin—or fiddle, as we called it,—and I have many dear remembrances of her playing. *Napoleon's March*, *Money Musk*, *The Devil's Dream* and half-a-dozen other simple tunes made up her repertoire. It was very crude music of course but it added to the love and admiration in which her children always held her. Also in some way we had fallen heir to a Prince melodeon—one that had belonged to the McClintocks, but only my sister played on that.

Once at a dance in neighbor Button's house, mother took the "dare" of the fiddler and with shy smile played *The Fisher's Hornpipe* or some other simple melody and was mightily cheered at the close of it, a brief performance which she refused to repeat. Afterward she and my father danced and this seemed a very wonderful performance, for to us they were "old"—far past such frolicking, although he was but forty and she thirty-one!

At this dance I heard, for the first time, the local professional fiddler, old Daddy Fairbanks, as quaint a character as ever entered fiction, for he was not only butcher and horse doctor

but a renowned musician as well. Tall, gaunt and sandy, with enormous nose and sparse projecting teeth, he was to me the most enthralling figure at this dance and his queer "Calls" and his "York State" accent filled us all with delight. "*Ally* man left," "Chassay *by* your pardners," "Dozy-*do*" were some of the phrases he used as he played *Honest John* and *Haste to the Wedding*. At times he sang his calls in high nasal chant, "*First* lady lead to the *right*, deedle, deedle dum-dum—*gent* foller after —dally-deedle-do-do—*three* hands round"—and everybody laughed with frank enjoyment of his words and action.

It was a joy to watch him "start the set." With fiddle under his chin he took his seat in a big chair on the kitchen table in order to command the floor. "Farm on, farm on!" he called disgustedly. "Lively now!" and then, when all the couples were in position, with one mighty No. 14 boot uplifted, with bow laid to strings he snarled, "Already—GELANG!" and with a thundering crash his foot came down, "Honors TEW your pardners—right and left FOUR!" And the dance was on!

I suspect his fiddlin' was not even "middlin'," but he beat time fairly well and kept the dancers somewhere near to rhythm, and so when his ragged old cap went round he often got a handful of quarters for his toil. He always ate two suppers, one at the beginning of the party and another at the end. He had a high respect for the skill of my Uncle David and was grateful to him and other better musicians for their noninterference with his professional engagements.

The school-house which was to be the center of our social life stood on the bare prairie about a mile to the southwest and like thousands of other similar buildings in the west, had not a leaf to shade it in summer nor a branch to break the winds of savage winter. "There's been a good deal of talk about setting out a wind-break," neighbor Button explained to us, "but nothing has as yet been done." It was merely a square pine box painted a glaring white on the outside and a desolate drab within; at least drab was the original color, but the benches were mainly so greasy and hacked that original intentions

were obscured. It had two doors on the eastern end and three windows on each side.

A long square stove (standing on slender legs in a puddle of bricks), a wooden chair, and a rude table in one corner, for the use of the teacher, completed the movable furniture. The walls were roughly plastered and the windows had no curtains.

It was a barren temple of the arts even to the residents of Dry Run, and Harriet and I, stealing across the prairie one Sunday morning to look in, came away vaguely depressed. We were fond of school and never missed a day if we could help it, but this neighborhood center seemed small and bleak and poor.

With what fear, what excitement we approached the door on that first day, I can only faintly indicate. All the scholars were strange to me except Albert and Cyrus Button, and I was prepared for rough treatment. However, the experience was not so harsh as I had feared. True, Rangely Field did throw me down and wash my face in snow, and Jack Sweet tripped me up once or twice, but I bore these indignities with such grace as I could command, and soon made a place for myself among the boys.

Burton Babcock was my seat-mate, and at once became my chum. You will hear much of him in this chronicle. He was two years older than I and though pale and slim was unusually swift and strong for his age. He was a silent lad, curiously timid in his classes and not at ease with his teachers.

I cannot recover much of that first winter of school. It was not an experience to remember for its charm. Not one line of grace, not one touch of color relieved the room's bare walls or softened its harsh windows. Perhaps this very barrenness gave to the poetry in our readers an appeal that seems magical, certainly it threw over the faces of Frances Babcock and Mary Abbie Gammons a lovelier halo.—They were "the big girls" of the school, that is to say, they were seventeen or eighteen years old,—and Frances was the special terror of the teacher, a pale and studious pigeon-toed young man who was preparing for college.

In spite of the cold, the boys played open air games all winter. "Dog and Deer," "Dare Gool" and "Fox and Geese" were our favorite diversions, and the wonder is that we did not all die of pneumonia, for we battled so furiously during each recess that we often came in wet with perspiration and coughing so hard that for several minutes recitations were quite impossible.—But we were a hardy lot and none of us seemed the worse for our colds.

There was not much chivalry in the school—quite the contrary, for it was dominated by two or three big rough boys and the rest of us took our tone from them. To protect a girl, to shield her from remark or indignity required a good deal of bravery and few of us were strong enough to do it. Girls were foolish, ridiculous creatures, set apart to be laughed at or preyed upon at will. To shame them was a great joke.—How far I shared in these barbarities I cannot say but that I did share in them I know, for I had very little to do with my sister Harriet after crossing the school-house yard. She kept to her tribe as I to mine.

This winter was made memorable also by a "revival" which came over the district with sudden fury. It began late in the winter—fortunately, for it ended all dancing and merry-making for the time. It silenced Daddy Fairbanks' fiddle and subdued my mother's glorious voice to a wail. A cloud of puritanical gloom settled upon almost every household. Youth and love became furtive and hypocritic.

The evangelist, one of the old-fashioned shouting, hysterical, ungrammatical, gasping sort, took charge of the services, and in his exhortations phrases descriptive of lakes of burning brimstone and ages of endless torment abounded. Some of the figures of speech and violent gestures of the man still linger in my mind, but I will not set them down on paper. They are too dreadful to perpetuate. At times he roared with such power that he could have been heard for half a mile.

And yet we went, night by night, mother, father, Jessie, all of us. It was our theater. Some of the roughest characters in the neighborhood rose and professed repentance, for a season,

even old Barton, the profanest man in the township, experienced a "change of heart."

We all enjoyed the singing, and joined most lustily in the tunes. Even little Jessie learned to sing *Heavenly Wings*, *There is a Fountain filled with Blood*, and *Old Hundred*.

As I peer back into that crowded little school-room, smothering hot and reeking with lamp smoke, and recall the half-lit, familiar faces of the congregation, it all has the quality of a vision, something experienced in another world. The preacher, leaping, sweating, roaring till the windows rattle, the mothers with sleeping babes in their arms, the sweet, strained faces of the girls, the immobile wondering men, are spectral shadows, figures encountered in the phantasmagoria of disordered sleep.

CARL SANDBURG

Poet, biographer

The name Carl Sandburg is one of many connotations: the prairie, Illinois, Chicago—"Hog butcher for the world"—Abraham Lincoln. One of the remarkable things about this present age of machinery and efficiency is the renewed interest in experiments in poetry. We cannot call Mr. Sandburg a leader in the movement, although his importance might warrant the title. One is convinced by the very sincerity and honesty of his poetry that he is no conscious founder of a new school. The same is true of his prose—especially his biography of Lincoln. His books are American, in that they express what is elemental and primary in American life. Brought up in that part of Illinois which Abraham Lincoln had known intimately, "Abe" had always a peculiar fascination for him. Somehow we find something akin in these two men. Had they lived in the same age, they would undoubtedly have been friends.

The following stanza,[1] like much of his poetry, tells us plainly of his art:

> I speak of new cities and a new people.
> I tell you the past is a bucket of ashes.
> I tell you yesterday is a wind gone down, a
> sun dropped in the west.
> I tell you there is nothing in the world only
> an ocean of to-morrows, a sky of to-morrows.

[1] From his poem "Prairie" in *Cornhuskers*.

LITTLE ABE LINCOLN[1]

During the year 1817, little Abe Lincoln, eight years old, going on nine, had an axe put in his hands and helped his father cut down trees and notch logs for the corners of their new cabin, forty yards from the pole-shed where the family was cooking, eating, and sleeping.

Wild turkey, ruffed grouse, partridge, coon, rabbit, were to be had for the shooting of them. Before each shot Tom Lincoln took a rifle-ball out of a bag and held the ball in his left hand; then with his right hand holding the gunpowder horn he pulled the stopper with his teeth, slipped the powder into the barrel, followed with the ball; then he rammed the charge down the barrel with a hickory ramrod held in both hands, looked to his trigger, flint, and feather in the touch-hole—and he was ready to shoot to kill for the home skillet.

Having loaded his rifle just that way several thousand times in his life, he could do it in the dark or with his eyes shut. Once Abe took the gun as a flock of wild turkeys came toward the new log cabin, and, standing inside, shot through a crack and killed one of the big birds; and after that, somehow, he never felt like pulling the trigger on game-birds. A mile from the cabin was a salt lick where deer came; there the boy could have easily shot the animals, as they stood rubbing their tongues along the salty slabs or tasting of a saltish ooze. His father did the shooting; the deer killed gave them meat for Nancy's skillet; and the skins were tanned, cut, and stitched into shirts, trousers, mitts, moccasins. They wore buckskin; their valley was called the Buckhorn Valley.

After months the cabin stood up, four walls fitted together with a roof, a one-room house eighteen feet square, for a family

[1] From Volume I of *Abraham Lincoln; The Prairie Years*. Reprinted by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.

to live in. A stick chimney plastered with clay ran up outside. The floor was packed and smoothed dirt. A log-fire lighted the inside; no windows were cut in the walls. For a door there was a hole cut to stoop through. Bedsteads were cleated to the corners of the cabin; pegs stuck in the side of a wall made a ladder for young Abe to climb up in a loft to sleep on a hump of dry leaves; rain and snow came through chinks of the roof onto his bearskin cover. A table and three-legged stools had the top sides smoothed with an axe, and the bark side under, in the style called "puncheon."

A few days of this year in which the cabin was building, Nancy told Abe to wash his face and hands extra clean; she combed his hair, held his face between her two hands, smacked him a kiss on the mouth, and sent him to school—nine miles and back—Abe and Sally hand in hand hiking eighteen miles a day. Tom Lincoln used to say Abe was going to have "a real eddication," explaining, "You air a-goin' to larn readin', writin', and cipherin'."

He learned to spell words he didn't know the meaning of, spelling the words before he used them in sentences. In a list of "words of eight syllables accented upon the sixth," was the word "incomprehensibility." He learned that first, and then such sentences as "Is he to go in?" and "Ann can spin flax."

Some neighbors said, "It's a pore make-out of a school," and Tom complained it was a waste of time to send the children nine miles just to sit with a lot of other children and read out loud all day in a "blab" school. But Nancy, as she cleaned Abe's ears in corners where he forgot to clean them, and as she combed out the tangles in his coarse, sandy black hair, used to say, "Abe, you go to school now, and larn all you kin." And he kissed her and said, "Yes, Mammy," and started with his sister on the nine-mile walk through timberland where bear, deer, coon, and wildcats ran wild.

Fall time came with its early frost and they were moved into the new cabin, when horses and a wagon came breaking into the clearing one day. It was Tom and Betsy Sparrow and their

seventeen-year-old boy, Dennis Hanks, who had come from Hodgenville, Kentucky, to cook and sleep in the pole-shed of the Lincoln family till they could locate land and settle. Hardly a year had passed, however, when both Tom and Betsy Sparrow were taken down with the "milk sick," beginning with a whitish coat on the tongue. Both died and were buried in October on a little hill in a clearing in the timbers near by.

Soon after, there came to Nancy Hanks Lincoln that white coating of the tongue; her vitals burned; the tongue turned brownish; her feet and hands grew cold and colder, her pulse slow and slower. She knew she was dying, called for her children, and spoke to them her last choking words. Sarah and Abe leaned over the bed. A bony hand of the struggling mother went out, putting its fingers into the boy's sandy black hair; her fluttering guttural words seemed to say he must grow up and be good to his sister and father.

So, on a bed of poles cleated to the corner of the cabin, the body of Nancy Hanks Lincoln lay, looking tired . . . tired . . . with a peace settling in the pinched corners of the sweet, weary mouth, silence slowly etching away the lines of pain and hunger drawn around the gray eyes where now the eyelids closed down in the fine pathos of unbroken rest, a sleep without interruption settling about the form of the stooped and wasted shoulder-bones, looking to the children who tiptoed in, stood still, cried their tears of want and longing, whispered "Mammy, Mammy," and heard only their own whispers answering, looking to these little ones of her brood as though new secrets had come to her in place of the old secrets given up with the breath of life.

And Tom Lincoln took a log left over from the building of the cabin, and he and Dennis Hanks whipsawed the log into planks, planed the planks smooth, and made them of a measure for a box to bury the dead wife and mother in. Little Abe, with a jackknife, whittled pine-wood pegs. And then, while Dennis and Abe held the planks, Tom bored holes and stuck the whittled pegs through the bored holes. This was the coffin, and they carried it the next day to the same little timber clearing near by,

where a few weeks before they had buried Tom and Betsy Sparrow. It was in the way of the deer-run leading to the saltish water; light feet and shy hoofs ran over those early winter graves.

So the woman, Nancy Hanks, died, thirty-six years old, a pioneer sacrifice, with memories of monotonous, endless every-day chores, of mystic Bible verses read over and over for their promises, and with memories of blue wistful hills and a summer when the crab-apple blossoms flamed white and she carried a boy-child into the world.

She had looked out on fields of blue-blossoming flax and hummed "Hey, Betty Martin, tiptoe, tiptoe"; she had sung "Greenland's Icy Mountains" and seen the early frost leaf its crystals on the stalks of buttonweed and redbud; she had sung:

> You may bury me in the east,
> You may bury me in the west,
> And we'll all rise together in that morning.

STEWART EDWARD WHITE

Essayist, story-writer

The most descriptive title to give Mr. White is "woodsman." He has lived in the out-of-doors most of his life and his books, whether fiction or non-fiction, are the books of one who is intimately acquainted with nature. In 1885, when he was a small boy, he went with his father to California. At that time, California was still, in a sense, a place of pioneers. He knew what it was to ride horseback more frequently than the metropolitan citizen uses street-cars; and he knew, from experience, the drama of a gold rush. He received his education at the University of Michigan and Columbia University. His life in cities has not changed the atmosphere of his stories. The subject matter of life and literature he believes to be man and his relations to his natural environment. It is not to be wondered at, then, that he found Daniel Boone a fascinating study.

"The technique of writing seems to me to depend first of all on a sense of balance and proportion. That is an innate sense. It tells one what to put in and what to leave out, and exactly what high lights to place upon this and what obscurities to put upon the other. It is a matter of feeling, a good deal like a feel for the air, or a feel for timing in athletics, that cannot be taught. However, it is a very vague thing without a knowledge of the use of the tools with which one transfers that feeling to paper. That is the mechanics of the operation and, like the innate faculties, is as vague and as purposeless, without a mechanism through which to pass. One has also to go through that

phase wherein one feels that the placing of things on paper is a sort of magic, and is therefore delighted with any result whatever, simply because it is a result. The stilted effect of fancy writing, of an attempt to be other than one is, to place things on paper in a 'fancy' manner, or in any other way than simply and directly, can only be taught by experience and by someone experienced. Therefore, tuition in clear and forceful writing is an absolute necessity for anyone who would write. Whether one is able to write effectively after acquiring these tools, whether one has the balance and artistic sense to make a work of art, depends of course upon the person."

—Stewart Edward White.

DANIEL BOONE [1]

When the young Daniel Boone was about fifteen years old his father decided to move farther south into a newer country. You may be sure Daniel eagerly seconded that move. Although the surroundings of Reading would have seemed wild enough for us, young Boone already knew them so thoroughly that his restless spirit demanded new countries to explore. They trekked across Maryland and Virginia on their journey, probably transporting all their goods in wagons, and accompanied by their little herds. This must have been a delightful journey through a beautiful country, a perpetual picnic of camps by the wayside. They settled finally near a little river called the South Yadkin in the western part of North Carolina.

This was then a region wild enough and rugged enough to suit any spirit of adventure. Here Daniel grew up to man's full estate in his father's house. There was an immense labour to be performed in building, in clearing, and in planting; and here he rounded out, brought to perfection, the education so well begun. His time was divided between being a farmer and being a hunter; with, however, considerable emphasis on the latter. Plenty of good farmers were to be had, but very few hunters as crafty, as well-informed, and as successful as Boone. To him was confided a great deal of the business of hunting, the procuring of the meat supply, for the rest of the family realized that from a given expenditure of powder, lead, and time Daniel could produce better results than any two of them. And results were what they must have. Sport came second. As Daniel had a true passion for hunting, everybody was satisfied and happy.

[1] From *Daniel Boone*, pp. 40–48. Copyright 1922 by Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc.

In due time other families moved into the neighbourhood. Among them were the Bryans. Within a brief period Daniel met Rebecca Bryan, and within briefer period after that they were married.

The wedding was typical of the day. People came from many miles, sometimes in vehicles, but more generally on horseback. Some had crude saddles of a sort, but many rode quite simply with blanket and surcingle, the women sitting behind and clinging tight to the men's waists. Everybody was out for a good time. The practical joker was in his element. The "road," which was most often a narrow trail through the mountain forests, they blocked by trees felled across it, so that the travellers had either to jump, to make long detours, or to do a little axe work. They tied vines across at a good height to knock off a hat. That does not sound like much fun, but you must remember there were plenty of girls there; and everybody could show off, and help them over the logs, and disentangle them from the vines, and generally skylark about. Sometimes the jokers would make a mock ambuscade, and there would be much firing of blank charges, and shrieks from the girls who would be *so* scared that thoughtlessly they would cling tight to their cavaliers.

After the wedding ceremony there was a grand feast of beef, pork, fowls, venison, wild turkey, bear meat, potatoes, cabbages, and corn bread. Then they danced square dances and reels on the puncheon floor to the squeaking of a fiddle.

The young couple moved farther back into the wilderness, nearer the mountain, and built themselves their home. The neighbours, of course, helped when coöperation was necessary. They called these occasions "raisings." After Boone had cut and trimmed the logs for his house, then his friends gathered with their wives and other womenfolk and bringing their horses and axes. They notched the logs, laid the mudsills, erected the frame of the house, hauling the logs up on skidways to their places. The horses strained, the axes rang, the yellow chips flew, the men shouted. And over in the maple grove the women

had fires going and pots bubbling, so that when dinner time came another feast was under way, with the squeaky fiddle not far off before they turned in under the open sky. In this manner the house and the barns and the corncrib went up like magic, so that when these neighbours, shouting their good-byes, trooped away down the forest aisles the Boones had only to chink and roof their new habitations before moving in.

A great deal of frontier work was done in this fashion. It was much more efficient, and loads more fun, to get together. There were "log rollings" when the trees that had been felled to make the clearing were rolled off to the edge of the forest; and "quiltings" when the women sewed together thousands of scraps to make crazy-quilts. When the corn crops had all been gathered and housed, they assembled at "husking bees." They stripped the husks and flung the yellow ears aside to the tune of laughter and again that squeaky fiddle. If a girl uncovered a red ear of the corn she must be kissed by the nearest young man. So it was with much of the similar work. Each man did his own job; but also he helped do his neighbour's, and his neighbour in turn helped him. Tasks that would have been interminable, lonesome, and tiresome, thus became pleasant.

As the years went on, the little valley of the Yadkin slowly became settled. The smoke from Boone's cabin was not the only one that rose against the mountain. As his neighbours crowded closer it became necessary to set boundaries and limits to his fields. He began to need elbow room.

Some people have written that Boone was a misanthrope, hating his fellow-beings and the world. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The writings of those who knew him are filled with his kindliness, his neighbourliness, his charity and wisdom in his dealings with men. But his was the pioneer spirit. He was interested in things as long as they were under construction; but he lost all interest in them when they were finished and ready to be enjoyed. "Something hid behind the ranges" was always whispering to him.

And "something hid behind the ranges" was in this case no

mere figure of speech. All the settlement of the Atlantic seaboard had been to the east of the Alleghenies, and had stopped short when that rampart was encountered. Concerning unexplored country that lay beyond, the wildest stories were told. As one little sample: it was told, and believed, that in that land there were snakes with horns on the end of their tails, which they used as weapons. One of these horns, stuck into a tree, no matter how big, blasted it at once! No one knew the truth of them, for none could speak at first hand. There were the dark blue mountains, and their skyline lay sharp against the sunset, but on what the last rays were looking when they sank below this unknown world no man could say.

Out from secret paths occasionally came small parties of Indians bent on trade or sight-seeing. They spoke of noble rivers, deep forests, wide plains, abundant game. But they spoke of it also, and fiercely, as a "dark and bloody ground," that no tribe owned or inhabited, but in which all tribes hunted and made war; a country of perils, of certain death, or captivity that would never end. What hope had the white man, no matter how bold and self-reliant, to cross the labyrinth of pathless and frowning ranges, to thread these great forests, to escape or make head against the hordes of fierce beasts and fiercer savages that there roamed? Only a very strong expedition would seem to have any chance at all; and by what means, by what road, could a strong party get there; and how maintain itself when arrived? The foremost minds of the day realized that there lay the country of the future, but the time was not yet.

Nevertheless there it lay, an ever-present lure to the soul of adventure. We can imagine many hardy men, like Boone, smoking their after-supper pipes before the doors of their cabins, looking upon that gilded skyline with longing and speculative eye.

It was a theme of never-ending discussion around the winter fires. No story concerning it was too wild or too absurd. A legend, a formidable legend, grew up about it, its dangers, its beauties, the fertility of its soil, the brilliance of its birds, the swarms of its game, the deadliness of its perils.

To such a man as Boone this legend could not fail to have a strong appeal. The appeal was strengthened not only by the crowding settlement of the Yadkin valley, but by the fact that at this time the exactions and abuses of the officers of the law became very oppressive. The governors sent out from England to administer the colonies were all of the aristocratic class, trained in the traditions of that class, fond of show and luxury, and inclined to appoint men of their own ilk for the lesser officer. By the time that spirit had filtered down to the outlying settlements it had become petty. Fees were charged by these lawyers and court officials for the most trivial of daily business: one man sued another at the slightest provocation, being urged thereto by these same officials, who would profit by it; and you may be sure the litigation was not permitted to die. The settlers, with increasing ease, began to rival each other in show and ornament. To a great extent the old intimate friendliness of a common danger and a common privation shared was giving way to the more complicated relationships of society. All this irked Boone. He was a man of simple friendliness, simple but true justice, a hearty despiser of scheming or cunning. And, strangely enough, in spite of his long record of warfare later, he was a man of peace; preferring, in spite of a sociable nature, solitude to the wild wranglings about him. But he was a proper pacifist in that he would fight for his own right to be peaceful!

These considerations, strongly reënforced by his adventurous spirit and his love of hunting, were working him toward a climax of resolve. The "something hid behind the ranges" was calling him louder and louder. He might have gone, irresponsibly, at any time, for he was bold and enterprising; but he was not longing for a mere hunting trip. Somewhere in that vast wilderness must be a place where men could live again in peace with each other; in the simplicity of the early days. But not just yet, in the cares of family life and making a living, did the vision form to him as of "one ordained by God to open a wilderness to a people."

PHILIP GUEDALLA

Critic, historian

Mr. Guedalla is distinguished for his contributions to historical biography, and for critical studies of European history. He began his career at Balliol College, Oxford, where he took honors as a student; and published his first books, while he was still an undergraduate. He has suggested the last chapter of his biography of *Palmerston* for study in this text.

We quote here what he says elsewhere about the business of the historian:

"He (the historian) is, when all is said, one cell in the world's memory of itself; he, too, like the lamented Proust, rides off *à la recherche du temps perdu*. And if the quest is to succeed, he must reconstruct the past, set old breezes stirring once again, and—most elusive miracle of all—bring the dead back to life. His business is to write about dead men; but if he is to do his duty, he should remember that they were not always dead. For he is not concerned to embalm them, but to resurrect, to set them moving, catch the tone of their voices, tilt of their heads, and posture of the once living men. . . . The past should, for the historian, be his present. He must never write from the angle of today, but almost always from the angle of contemporaries with the events that he describes. . . . When his reader is set dreaming of the past, the historian has done his work, only provided that the dream be true. For then *temps perdu* has become *temps retrouvé*, and the quest is ended."[1]

—PHILIP GUEDALLA.

[1] Reprinted from the publisher's advertisment of book by permission of G. P. Putnam's Sons.

PALMERSTON [1]

The last fight was won, and the old champion went into the country to wait for his eighty-first birthday. Alone of all the things he had waited for—the coach from Harrow, a seat in Parliament, office, Emily Cowper, the fall of Metternich, his tit for tat with Johnny Russell, the Premiership, news from Sebastopol, the end of Mr. Gladstone's speeches—it never came. He was not well that year. Even Majesty, far away among her memories in Coburg, had been solicitous; but she got little by her enquiries beyond his humble duty, thanks for her gracious mention, and a sturdy assertion that he "deems it a duty which he owes to your Majesty, to do his best to maintain that health which is essential for the performance of the duties of the post which your Majesty has been graciously pleased to confer upon him."

They were all at Brocket, and he was more than usually charming. There were two young couples in the house; and as he watched them, he drew Em's arm into his own and said so sweetly: "Here we are, three pairs of lovers." But he was looking ill; and something of his exhaustion crept into a reply, when they were looking at the stars one night, and someone expressed a wish to visit them in the hereafter. He thought it possible, but inclined to the opinion that there would first be "a time of repose after the action and fatigue of this life."

So the summer passed away, and leaves fell. He was no better. One morning in October, with Parliament and the autumn Cabinets in prospect, he was gravely testing his strength, when a chance witness at a window saw a Prime Minister of eighty cross the drive without his hat, deliberately climb a railing

[1] Reprinted from *Palmerston*, pp. 457–459, by permission of G. P. Putnam's Sons.

twice, and go into the house again. He was still gravely talkative when Em's eye was on him, quoted Virgil, even told them a story of his fatal proclivity for stone-throwing seventy years before at Harrow; but as the old man told it, his laughter was a trifle uncontrolled and showed a touch of weakness. He still worked at his papers, writing to colleagues, urging Mr. Gladstone to overcome his invincible repugnance to the expenditure of public money and sanction an increase of establishment at the Privy Council Office (although he had his own moments of economy, and declined to spend £20,000 on a house at Copenhagen for the Prince and Princess of Wales). He kept a singularly watchful eye upon the Fenians, proposed to send an additional regiment of cavalry to Ireland, was eloquent upon the merits of that arm in agrarian disturbances, shrewdly opined that "a Fenian put suddenly on horseback . . . would not be a cavalry soldier," and was cheerfully prepared to override the Commander-in-Chief in Ireland who "has been accustomed to walk over everything and everybody opposed to him." Was it not half a century since Palmerston had broken his first lance with a Commander-in-Chief? He worked on at his red boxes, pressing the War Department to improve the defences of Quebec and maintain adequate supplies of munitions in Canada; and eight days later, on October 11, he was writing to Black Rod, offering the somewhat threadbare consolation on the defeat of a relative that "casualties will happen in Parliamentary warfare, and it is not always the most deserving that heads the Poll," and blandly refusing the Bath on the ground of his imperfect knowledge of the claims of candidates. The letter was as brisk as usual: he never signed another.

On the next day (it was a Thursday) Lady Palmerston found him poorly; but they drove out together. Autumn was drawing on, and he came home with a cold. Easy as ever, he "was 1½ hours undressing and dawdling, and would take his bath as usual." The lapse was fatal, and he almost died that night. But he was still alive on Sunday, making little jokes about his medicine. Beyond the Tweed a royal letter-writer sat at Bal-

moral and conveyed the sad intelligence to a beloved uncle. She showed a mild regret, but bore the impending blow with calm, resolved sedately to send for Lord Russell if the worst happened, and was gratified to think that she would not need to hasten her departure by more than three or four days. This said, she plunged into bright memories of "*our dear Verlobungstag*, 26 years ago!" Lord Palmerston had other thoughts that day, since one of his doctors felt the moment opportune for a vigorous exposition of the truths of revealed religion. Propounded in the form of questions, these elicited from the Prime Minister a brief, but gratifying, affirmative. "Oh certainly," he said; and to a further enquiry, "Oh surely." That succinct reply to ill-timed ardour must always seem, in the perfection of its courtesy, the last word of the Eighteenth Century.

Refreshed by these debates, he rallied upon a wild dietary of mutton and apple tart. He breakfasted on Monday off mutton chops and a half-glass of old port, expressing a gentle wonder that he "should have lived so long without discovering what a good breakfast it is." But he wavered on the next day, although the news of royal enquiries could still elicit a murmur of: "It is very kind of her Majesty; I am much better." The autumn day was fading, as he lay waiting in the room at Brocket, still waiting—with only two more days to wait—for his eighty-first birthday. It was a quiet room, where his poor weary Emily sat waiting also; until it fell silent on the morning of October 18, 1865, and the last candle of the Eighteenth Century was out.

JOHN DRINKWATER

Poet, biographer, dramatist

Mr. Drinkwater must have a love for historical characters: Abraham Lincoln, Mary Stuart, and Oliver Cromwell have been the characters about which he has built three plays, the first of which brought him his greatest literary fame. Years ago Cromwell was the subject of a blank verse poem and a few years ago of a prose biography by Mr. Drinkwater. That means that these characters have not been to him merely dead characters of a dead past. And in his plays and in his biography he has made these people live for us again as they have lived for him. Perhaps it is more difficult to recreate the past than it is to create pure fiction.

"The whole difference between good writing and bad writing is that in bad writing a man has not decided precisely what he wants to say and in consequence does not say it precisely, whereas in good writing he has so decided down to the finest shade of meaning and has been able to find the exact words in which to express every subtlety of this thought. Even with a natural gift, this mastery can only be attained after long and patient discipline, and also by a very careful study of the way in which the good writers have been able to do this most difficult of things."

—JOHN DRINKWATER.

ENVIRONMENT OF YOUTH[1]

On April 23rd of that year Oliver Cromwell was entered as a Fellow Commoner of Sidney-Sussex College. On the same day Shakespeare died at Stratford-on-Avon. What Oliver did or learnt at Cambridge nobody thought it worth while to record, as, indeed, why should they of a youth in no way distinguishable from a hundred other? For however much or little we know of his early years, and as may already be divined it is mostly little, there is no hint anywhere that he was marked out for future greatness. Legends of his having startled the ridicule of his school-mates by assuming a property crown and announcing that he meant to become King of England are Heathean fancies far less convincing than the accounts of his simian adventures; less convincing, that is, as being evidence of some serious intention, though that he did it is likely enough in the common traffic of any nursery or schoolroom. There is no evidence that anyone saw in him early promise of remarkable faculties, and none that he was in those days himself conscious of possessing them. His prospects at Cambridge were those of any young man who after a modestly liberal education should go back to take his place in the affairs of a well-furnished but not affluent family, and in due course perhaps to preside over them. As things turned out the call came sooner than was expected, Oliver having been at the University little more than a year when his father died. He returned to Huntingdon, leaving Cambridge for good in the middle of 1617, but for some obscure reason did not remain to supervise the establishment of which he was the only male representative. Carlyle, observing that it was not fit for the boy of eighteen to take his father's place, as

[1] From *Oliver Cromwell*, pp. 33–43. Copyright 1927 by Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc.

he might very well have done, adds that he naturally enough proceeded to qualify himself for his office by going to study law in London. The reasoning escapes me, though there may be something in it, but in any case we know that to London he went. He is said to have been a member of Lincoln's Inn, but the statement is not confirmed by the records. Of his movements until 1620 nothing authoritative is known, not, indeed, even that he was in London, but it was in London that in 1620 he was married.

Heath confirms the pledge of his Apples and little Pidgeons by informing us that in these years after Cambridge Oliver became a notorious toss-pot and drabber. It was, it seems, because of these excesses that he was sent to London, an exile at his mother's orders lest he should corrupt the home. Carrion Heath, as Carlyle loves to call him, here well overreaches himself. Anybody can say this sort of thing about anybody else, and there are always professional defamers about who are eager to say it of everybody; but society has long since agreed not to be stampeded without evidence, and of evidence in this matter Heath and his friends have never been able to advance a pot-house tag. Moreover, although our knowledge of Cromwell's relations with his mother is slight, it all points to an unbroken tale of confidence and sweetness. That the young Oliver climbed over fences, not always very nimbly perhaps, and that he stole a young dove or two for his supper, we may believe; it is even possible that with the coming of adolescence he may have taken an indiscreet glass of malt or cowslip wine and have kissed the chambermaid. But Heath implies an incurable levity, and the charge is fantastic. At which we may leave it.

At the age of twenty Cromwell must have been conscious, as were all responsible men, of difficult undercurrents in the state. He must, for example, have been conscious of a certain bad thing called Buckingham that was somehow affecting the lives of simple citizens in Huntingdon and such places. The creative surge of Elizabethan England had not yet spent its force, and the nation could still live upon its capital without disaster. But

living on its capital it was, and serious patriots were beginning to realise that a reckoning would presently have to be made. In her assumption of a direct and personal power in the monarch, Elizabeth was the true daughter of Henry VIII, though like her father she had the good sense not to disregard the people's will, but to use it. Individuals, however distinguished or highly placed, who fell foul of the Queen's designs or even of her humours, often enough had melancholy occasion to reflect that personal liberty in England was no more than an illusion, but Elizabeth, through the agency of exceedingly able ministers, was above all else careful that these designs and humours should never come seriously into conflict with the interests of her subjects as a whole. The unexampled discoveries of her poets and explorers, the daily widening horizons of commerce, the rapid expansion of humane learning and the eager approach to modern philosophical science, gave her court and person an easy and undisputed prestige, and they kept the minds of men creatively and therefore safely occupied. The strain upon the immediate counsellors of the throne was constant and severe, and hardly one of them could be sure at any time that his job, not to say his head, was worth a day's purchase, but the average Englishman felt with good reason that he had a profitable stake in what was very much a going concern.

Under the first Stuart things began to change, not convulsively at first, but perceptibly to shrewd observers. James I neither understood nor wanted to understand the English people. Personally obstinate and inquisitive, with an agreeable flair for scholarship and the arts, his policy as a sovereign was all for securing a quiet life at any price. Quiet, that is to say, for himself; but the design necessitated certain conditions in the attempt to effect which a quiet life was made impossible for Englishmen in general for twenty tragic years. The first of these was that he, James, should have unlimited funds with which to cover his extravagances and, more particularly, those of his favourites, Buckingham in chief. A quiet life, in fact, meant a life without stint or responsibilities. James and Buckingham

asked no more than that they should be allowed to do what they liked, when they liked, and as lavishly as they liked. Let the country supply means for that, and the country then could go to the devil or elsewhere without interference. Whatever the present whim might be, from a water-party to an armed expedition on the Continent, it must be indulged on the moment and the reference to no authority beyond the royal pleasure. That if in these circumstances the country should actually go to the devil they themselves would take the same journey does not seem to have occurred to James or his parasite, neither of whom had the smallest state intelligence. The King vaguely supposed that a king of this world could not in any case come to any serious harm, and Buckingham, fondly intent on feathering his own nest, did not pause to consider what would happen if the tree in which it was lodged should be felled. And so began the irregularity in levying supplies that rapidly became a fixed principle which all the officers of the Crown were expected to adopt. The idea of the divine rights of kings, as expounded by the first and second Stuarts, may have been capable of some spiritual interpretation in the abstract, but in practice it amounted to no more than an assertion of the King's right to spend the public money to any extent for any purpose he pleased, and no reckoning to be made. Elizabeth could never have lent herself to so gross a stupidity, and in the name of an awakening nationalism she might have done so with far more hope of fooling the people than was possible when, a generation later, the first rapture was waning and the country was beginning to contemplate the adventure through which it had passed. Elizabeth would impoverish a wealthy courtier for her own ends without scruple, but even at a time of public excitement, when such courses are easiest, she allowed herself no sophistries about public funds. James, far less advantageously placed, had nothing of his predecessor's instinct for government nor of her essential integrity. When constitutional supplies seemed to him to be inadequate, he supplemented them by loot on a large scale, and gradually the people began to see that for them there was

nothing in it of honour to compensate for the loss of profit. To say that the Puritan rebellion was the consequence of this recognition would, perhaps, be to over-state the case, but no circumstance did more to create the mood in which the will to rebellion was born.

The other condition desired by James for his quiet life was peace with foreign powers. This ambition, so laudable in itself, was unhappily not informed in his mind by any constructive aim. He merely wanted to be friends with everybody because it saved trouble, but it was beyond his power and even his inclination to discover what if any were the solid foundations upon which a general and lasting amity could be built. That a council of Solomons could have solved the riddle of European political intrigue at the time—or at any time for that matter—is improbable, but it was at least necessary for any sovereign who was to retain the confidence of his people that he should make a show of pursuing a coherent policy advantageous to national interests or reputation. James never began to be coherent in his diplomacy, and denied the right of the people to keep any check on his caprices. He drifted from one insecure alliance to another, entered into undertakings that he had no prospect of fulfilling, and engaged in shady stratagems in which he had some of the cunning but none of the pertinacity and executive astuteness of his rivals. The consequent loss of national dignity might have been suffered without open revolt if the country's credit abroad had alone been involved in this cynically shiftless course, but the popular mind was slowly compelled to attention by an aspect of the King's conduct in foreign affairs which it neither would nor could view with indifference. Religion, as expressed in outward form and doctrine, was an issue on which a great and influential body of the people felt very deeply. Essential devoutness is not for the moment in question, nor need we ask whether the country was the better for the strictness of its formal professions. The point is that to the majority of Englishmen in the early seventeenth century religious form was a matter of daily and vital concern, and the form by which the coun-

try as a whole stood was that of the Protestant church. Within this church itself the contentions between Episcopalianism or the establishment and Puritanism or non-conformity was deep, and in the end to prove one of the capital causes of civil war, but both factions alike were determined in their opposition to Rome. Under Elizabeth the suppression of the papacy in England had been firmly and as it seemed finally secured, but there was still a numerous, influential, and by no means resigned Catholic population in the country. This community, again, was divided among itself, a certain number of political moderates professing loyalty to the Crown, while the Jesuits carried on an indefatigable conspiracy to overthrow the existing monarchy and government with the aid of foreign intervention, and bring a Catholic prince to the throne. With the accession of James in 1603 there was some relaxation of the penal code against Catholics, or at least in its enforcement, but the discovery and failure of the Gunpowder Plot two years later brought down the fury of the law and of the people upon the Jesuits and with them on English Catholics in general. For six years a danger that was a very alarming one seemed to have passed, and then, in 1611, James, finding that accommodation to his taste in finance was not to be had from the Commons, decided to dispense with Parliament and govern by the more congenial instrumentality of Buckingham instead. Communication in those days was slow and difficult, and the constituencies relied chiefly on the occasional visits of their members for news of what was going forward at court and in the councils of state. With the members dismissed, this source of information was cut off, and it took a long time for the country to realise what precisely were the current practices of the King and his favourite. But slowly a rumour sharpened into authority that the Defender of their Faith was negotiating with the Spanish Court about a match between his son Charles, now Prince of Wales, and the Infanta. This opened up a future of terror to every Protestant mind. It was not merely a question of rival religious interests. Before their hopes, though nothing else had been blown up in the Gunpowder Plot, the

Jesuits had been candidly debating whether, upon the enforced and happy re-conversion of England, the Inquisitional machinery of Spain or that of Italy would be the more suitable for this country, with a tendency in favour of the more thorough methods of the former. The King of England, anxious for a quiet life, was proposing to buy the favour of a dominant European power by delivering his people into a bondage that had been broken with so much pain and fortitude. A Catholic consort meant who knew what concessions to Rome and England, and it more than probably meant Catholic kings in the coming generations. Before this menace the differences between Bishops and Nonconformists were for the moment of little consequence. The solid body of Protestant opinion in the country was disturbed by very exact and grave misgivings. And there was no apparent means of redress, or even of protest, in the absence of parliamentary representation. James had already told his subjects without ceremony that he meant to mind his own business about their money, and he had committed every kind of misdemeanour with their national inheritance from the preceding reign. He was now inviting the return of a scourge at the thought of which the stoutest might well tremble. And while nobody was clear as to what would be done about it, the gentlemen, the merchants, the artisans, and the yeomen up and down the shires were awakening to the conviction that something must be done if the promise of personal liberty that for fifty years had been slowly defining itself was not to be swept away, it might be for ever.

THOMAS BURKE

Novelist, short-story writer, essayist

"A wet day or a grey twilight is less troublous to the soul if brown sails, red funnels, and great sparks break up its melancholy."

If Mr. Burke had not had a love for color and life, we should never have had his *Limehouse Nights* or any of the dozen other volumes of London and its Chinatown. Born and reared in the most sordid of surroundings, he was able to see through the Causeway into a mysterious and beautiful world. We should be thankful for that moment of spiritual awakening when Quong Lee beckoned him into his shop.—A queer silent friendship this, but invaluable in the unconscious development of Mr. Burke's powers. One must admire his sincerity as well as his beautiful use of language: he has never turned snob; he has never been ashamed to acknowledge his early environment, for it is about that that he writes. Neither does he hide the sordid under any sentimental lacquer of beauty—the sordid and the brutal are there, but so is the beautiful.

CAUSEWAY [1]

The road is long, says the Eastern sage, but it has many corners; and my London road has corners at Limehouse Causeway; at a court in the heart of Bermondsey; at Grill Park Road; at Greenwich; at Paddington Station; at "The Barge Aground"; at Lyons' tea-shop in Holborn; at Belgravia; at Gracechurch Street; at Brick Lane; and the Borough High Street; each corner a symbol of those other symbols of life which we call facts.

At the first corner I see a little store in that street where China has settled on the coast of London and brought grace and bitterness to the midnights of court and alley. Over the doorway of this store is a gas-lamp painted with the chop of Quong Lee. It is a side-street shop, no different in structure from the side-street shops of any working-class district; small and low, with many panes to its window; but its side-panels are fantastically gay with Chinese script, and its window is crammed with the merchandise of legend. Blue jars of ginger. Coloured canisters of tea. Tins of fruit and fish and syrup, lifted above the tinned goods of other shops by their ribbons of ideographs. Crooked weapons and statuettes of coral and jade. Dishes of dried fins, of lychees, longans, seaweed, and water-lily flour. Teapots built into cradles of cushion and wicker. Banners and masks and punk-sticks.

Before that window a child stands by the half-hour, poring upon the ideographs, then (as now) fuller for him of hidden beauty than any painted picture. About him is a narrow street, and through its mist move the calm faces of Canton and Malaya. There are open doors showing long, dark passages, and at the end of them the glow of a lamp, half-seen figures, the smell of

[1] From *The Wind and the Rain*, pp. 9–23. Copyright 1924 by Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc.

sweet scent and dirt, the faint music of guitar and drum. Above his head hangs the lantern of Quong Lee, and beyond the window sits Quong Lee himself, gazing out as the boy gazes in.

Quong Lee wears steel spectacles and the hair at his temples is grey. He wears a blue linen suit, loose sleeves, a skullcap of black silk, and a long queue. (The Republic is not yet heard of.) He has the husky voice of those who have lived long in the sunshine. His teeth are pink from long chewing of betel-nut, and his skin has the appearance of having been fine-combed. All day and all the evening he sits in the corner-seat of his counter, gazing through the window with unwinking eyes, as though carven. He seems to be a part of the immutable. His temper is fixed, aloof from the disturbance of delight or distress. He seems as set as his ginger-jars, as permanent and tranquil as the expressionless face of his seven-stomached Lord of Right Living.

But it was not so. Fluent as his road had been, it had a sharp corner. His shop is there; his lantern is there; maybe his spirit is there; but the English law had not the child's feeling for the perdurable, and all that the child now has of him in material shape is an old silk cap, tasselled with devil-chasers.

. . . . . .

Many years later I was sitting in the Ivy Restaurant with a young composer who a month or so earlier had arrived. He was at the top-side of his hour. He sat before me, under the stare of the other tables, tingling with nervous force, ruffling his dark curls, flashing with mignon gesture, and talking sardonically about himself. People came to us at intervals without apology or introduction. An actor of the higher drama, dark and reticent, offered him a white hand. A queen of drawing-room comedy bowed. A bearded dramatic critic gave him a glance that, coming from him, was a benediction. A novelist with owlish eyes shook hands and inspected him without speaking. A London Gossiper, the Captain Gronow of our day, stood over him, slim and saturnine, dropping languid epigrams. His

agent came across, and we found a chair for him, and at last lunch was ordered. People stared, as though anxious to see (at least) what the man was eating.

At this point I suffered the feeling that I have suffered at every corner, where in the moment of turning, one stands still and sees oneself and the occasion set apart, as a picture or statuary, exhibited under glass. It seemed fabulous that I should be sitting in that place, careless of the clock, careless of the bill, undismayed by the surroundings, and in the company of those who, ten years ago, to my eyes walked on clouds. Me—in the Ivy. Was it really me sitting there? Me—the Hardcress kid, brought up to be humble, and to order myself lowly and reverently towards the Nobility and Gentry, and to remember that I had no rights except what charity conceded to me; a lesson so stamped into me that it has become a part of my character. A queer thing, this Me. I was the Causeway. I was the one room in Carfax Street. I was the Big House at Greenwich. I was the Orphanage. I was the Dark House in Grill Park Road. I was the City Office. I was London Bridge. I was the Old Kent Road Lodging-house. I was . . .

At that moment a mousse of chicken was served, and as I looked up from my plate I caught my young friend's eye and, speaking without thinking, I said: "Pearce and Plenty, Goswell Road. Eh?" His eye flickered. The faint grin of his that plays shield to his quivering spirit flashed across his face, and he asked:

"How do you know?"

I said, "Your face. You've got the marks of it. One never loses them."

He said, "Funny! I used to go to that one. And it's just what I was thinking when you spoke. Only I'd never have said it."

As the lunch went on we telegraphed each other. "Lockhart's, Charing Cross," says he to the asparagus.

"Good Pull Up, Newington Causeway," I said to the Pêche Melba.

And when M. Abel himself poured the liqueurs, " 'The Old Foresters.' Tuppence a basin."

I knew that his road had many corners, and I could see that he was fumbling after them. He came out at last with the phrase with which even serious philosophers must begin and end—"Life's a queer thing," and stopped. Then went on, and for ten minutes the conversation was a string of sententious burbling. "All accidents. Here we are, sitting here, a few years after Pearce and Plenty. What extraordinary accident brought us here?"

"Lord knows. What accident made you a composer?"

"Couldn't say. One of a dozen moments. Being miserable, for one thing. Wanting to tell people what I felt about things. Meeting a man at Kennington Oval. All of 'em were corners, but where I turned off, I don't know." He stopped and drank coffee. "We're all decorated with accidents. Assemblies of parts, like a South Sea nigger, with this man's hat, t'other fellow's cuffs, and somebody else's umbrella."

"But did you want to be a composer?"

"Never entered my head in those days. Music was always part of me, but I wanted to be—oh, all sorts of things—expressive things. But composer . . . First of all, I reckon I wanted two pairs of boots instead of one pair that let water. I wanted books. And theatres and concerts. And all the time I was really working—at silly, useless work—I never got near those things. No money, no hope, stupid people all round us, and always—just out of my reach—music and books and the people who did things. Now I'm doing work that is sheer enjoyment, they'll give me everything I want. And all an accident. Not the thing I foreshadowed for myself. Never is, is it? What made you a writer?"

"I think I can answer that. It goes back to a moment when I was ten years old, looking in a shop-window. I began writing at sixteen. Not because I wanted to write, or thought I could write, or for the joy of writing, but with one purpose. I've been at it ever since. Just trying to express one moment in a London side-street. I've never done it yet. But one goes on and does other things by accident. Eh?"

"I know. I had something like that once. One of those things that stick with you, and somehow get into your work."

"I'd like to hear it."

"Why, it was. . . . Oh . . . But *you* know. The moment when everything comes close to you and you understand everything. When you—" He hovered for a word, then used face and hands, miming: "I can play it but I can't explain it. I'd rather hear about yours. The accidents and all that."

"Yes, but the only important thing in any story is the gaps. And gaps never register. The growth spaces—when you change colour and style and find yourself different without knowing how it happened. You think that love or success or disaster are the big moments, but, looking back, you see it was the little, unnoticed street-corner moments that mattered. And they're hard to get at."

"I know. Like thinking. You start thinking about, say, blankets, and a minute later you find you're thinking of the nebular theory; and tracing back you see that it was an orderly progression of forty separate steps. . . . But, blimey, we're getting into deep stuff! Let's talk about Pearce and Plenty!"

. . . . . .

Well, at the time of my visits to the Causeway, I was living with Uncle Frank in Poplar, and I was happy there. We lived in one room of the upstairs back of a small house in Carfax Street. It was a street of uniform bald houses of four rooms and scullery. Its parlour windows bayed out to the street, without the grace of one yard of green or the gentility of a gate. Some of the houses, at that time, in a spasm of discontent with their estate, had turned themselves into shops, and had made a bad job of it, being neither good shop nor honest house; but though it was down it grinned. Always there was the noise of dogs and babies, and the cheery calls of neighbour to neighbour and the occult cries of coal-man, winkle-man, milk-man, and balloon-and-flag man. There was no melancholy in Carfax Street. Wonderful people lived there, too. We had a riveter, a French polisher, a turner, a screw-maker, a glass-bender, a carver and

gilder, a wheelwright—all of them magicians with their hands; men who could *make* things. Whenever I heard them talking of their work, I settled my future on the work that was being talked about.

Ours was a jolly little home. The length and breadth of home was exactly five of my paces; I had often marched to war across it with a sword made by Uncle Frank from a broken trowel and a stair-railing. On one side, next the cupboard, was the bed. Against the window was a little deal table with two "leaves," both sadly warped, and two chairs. On the right of the fireplace was the pine chest of drawers, containing Sunday clothes and uncle's treasures; and on the other, the coal-box, the water-can, and the wash-stand. Over the fireplace hung an illuminated scroll in red and gold lettering: "Presented to Mr. Reuben Battershell on the occasion of his leaving 'The Galloping Horses' as a token of esteem and respect in which he was held by his following friends"—and over the bed a coloured supplement on art paper showing Wilson Barret in "The Sign of the Cross."

In the past Uncle Frank had been an innkeeper, but he was then gardener at a big house in Greenwich. It was always the Big House, and its owner, except in moments of petulance, The Lady. He still kept the signboard under the bed—"The Galloping Horses."—Reuben Battershell. Free House—and it served him as rosary in desolate hours.

"Hi, cock. Fetch out the ole signboard. Let's 'ave a look at 'er! Ha! That was a House, me boy. I wasn't touching me 'at to nobody then. No fear. I made that House, me boy. Got it cheap. It'd gone down. Doing nothing. In three months, me boy, I couldn't take the money fast enough."

"Why ain't you got it now, uncle?"

"Never you mind, me boy. As you get older you'll learn that there's ups and downs in everything. And no counting on 'em neither."

I loved Uncle Frank, and it hurts me to-day that I can only remember him as a shiftless figure of fun whom nobody for a

moment took seriously. The farcical gestures alone remain—the nods, the winks, the finger at the nose, the rude words, the schoolboy foolery that sorted so ill with his short, round figure. I want to remember the other things—the years of service and companionship, the self-denial and care and thought. And I can't. I do not think of him sitting up with me all night through a sickness, and working all day and sitting up all the next night. I think of him treading on a rake in the garden and hurting his nose. I think of him falling downstairs over Miss Paske's cat. I think of him coming home one Bank Holiday wearing a long yellow nose. I see him halfway inside his Sunday shirt, swearing because he couldn't find the sleeve-holes. I see him always ludicrous in ludicrous situations, always laughing at himself, always facetious in serious moments. I want to think of him with reverence, but the moment I think of him I laugh, and then am ashamed. But perhaps it doesn't matter. Perhaps a laughing remembrance counts as high for his welfare as a solemn requiem.

I loved Poplar, too. It had rich company and kind streets and laughter, and ships and water. These things—a work of art and a work of nature—carry beauty and the feeling of adventure wherever they go. They lend colour to the people who have to do with them; and a wet day or a grey twilight is less troublous to the soul if brown sails, red funnels, and great spars break up its melancholy. Over the wall of East India Dock lay the world. The world was even with us in the streets, for around the dock and on the point opposite the Tunnel gathered men from all the seven seas. The feeling of travel was always with us. There were ships' chandlers and junk shops and foreign sailors' homes, and the very newspaper shops displayed books on ships and navigation and signalling. Always there were movement and the light and space of neighboring water, and the bells and whistles of departing ships, and grave-eyed sailors to light the poorest alley with the nobility of the sea and the strength of the human heart.

I say I was happy with Uncle Frank and the rough and gusty

life of Carfax Street; but often there were those moments of restlessness known to all children—moments of mystery half-perceived—which I couldn't understand, and which I couldn't take to Uncle Frank. I divined that he would be beyond solving them, and would think I was ailing. It was then that I would escape down the road and wander in a street of no-time and no-place; a street of spices and golden apples, where men, dark or lemon-faced, wearing the raiment of pantomime, swam through the mist or held the walls in living statuary. There lived all wonder and dismay, and the rewards that come to us in dreams. What drew me to it I do not know, but I loved to be there, to touch shoulders with its shadows, or to stand at the window of Quong Lee filled with a Want that I could not name. I was out of the world of the common things that I knew, lost in a world to which I had no key; a world that, I felt even then, held, behind all its colour, something pale and cold and pitiless; the marble stupor of those who have lived a thousand years and have a thousand more to live, giving no revelation, but turned always inward, solitary and self-sufficient.

I could not, of course, shape it or say it to myself; I could only distress myself with the feeling, and loaf about the Causeway out of tune with myself and my pals of Carfax Street. Although I lived at the waterside, ships and the water had none of the interest for me they had for other boys. Even at ten years old I was interested more in people than in things. But, like all land creatures, I would often go down to it, and stand on the wharf for an hour, staring at the water and the boats, and wondering what it all meant and whether Quong Lee's shop-window would explain it.

And then, one evening, as I stood in the Causeway staring through his window at him, Quong Lee raised a hand and beckoned. For a moment or so I did not move. I was struck suddenly shy and apprehensive. Then he beckoned again, and I understood that he was inviting me in. This was the moment that I had waited and wooed him for. Dare I? I would.

With a sense of desperate adventure, as of cutting myself off

from the friendly world, I went in. He smiled. I smiled; though not easily: I was trembling. Then he turned in his seat behind the counter, opened a jar, speared in it with a wooden skewer, and held out to me a piece of ginger.

Again I hesitated; and in the moment of hesitating the thing happened. In that moment I knew a joy sharper than any I had known, and with it came a sense of time arrested and crystallised; a sense of eternity; a fancy that always, behind the curtain of time, this thing had been; that always Quong Lee had been sitting in that shop in that street; that for all time he had been holding out a piece of ginger and I had been standing before him, with the pins-and-needles of emotion in the back of my neck, holding out my hand to him. With it came, too, something more than joy; something that I know now was at once joy and knowledge and understanding and serenity. The Secret. I knew then all the beauty and all the evil of the heart of Asia; its cruelty, its grace, and its wisdom. And I felt that whatever else might move or change, whatever comings and goings there might be, Quong Lee and I would not change. Always he would be sitting on a stool behind the counter of that shop, beckoning to me, and always I would be holding out my hand.

Then it was gone. I took the piece of ginger and ate it, smiling from a full mouth, back in the world of time and place; but a world with a difference. Something had happened to me; something beyond the fact that I had got into Quong Lee's shop; and I knew that shop-windows would never be the same again. I had achieved contact, and the Causeway would be for ever part of me. I had turned my first corner.

When I had eaten the ginger, grinning idiotically all the time, he beckoned me to come round the counter. I went; and he showed me his calculus, his bowl of ink, his writing-brushes, and the pad of flimsy paper on which he made out his bills. He showed me a green-and-yellow Buddha. He showed me a temple carved from six inches of ivory. He took down from the wall one of the many masks with which it was covered—flamboyant affairs of reds and blues and whites and golds—and put it over

his face. He showed me prayer-papers and a joss and a pair of chop-sticks, and marvels of banners and pipes writhing with decoration.

And all the time I grinned, not knowing what it was all about or what I was supposed to do or say, or why I was invited in; but thrilled, wildly thrilled, and in love with this shrivelled old foreigner. We all laughed at foreigners then; Foreigners were so Funny, and none so Funny as the Chinkies. But though with the others I had laughed at them, I could not laugh at Quong Lee. I found in him—or put there—the essence of all the things I had felt or seen in the Causeway and in the water. I loved Uncle Frank but I had never caught myself loving him. I loved him as I ate my breakfast or washed my neck. But this was different; this was sharp feeling. I felt that he had picked upon me, above all other boys, as worthy of his notice, and I wanted to do something for him; to cut a figure before him; to earn his esteem. But I just stood there, sizzling and grinning, until he speared another piece of ginger and pushed me to the door.

I ran home. I ran all the way home, and went straight indoors. But I didn't tell Uncle Frank or anybody about it. Uncle Frank wouldn't have liked it, and I knew how the chaps would laugh and chi-ike me for chumming up with a silly old Chinky. So I kept quiet. The outer door of my secret world was half-open, and I must keep it so that I might slip in and out. I could not live in it; the life for me was the life of Carfax Street; the little ordinary things; but I hugged it as one hugs a hiding-place for one's special treasures which are too precious to be shared.

From those first few minutes with him my life changed, and his shop became my other home. The world was lit up. Until then I had seen things only as things. Now I saw life and meaning (though what meaning I did not know) in every common sight and object of the streets. Evening after evening I went there, looking through the window until I was invited in; and once in, I was free to roam about the place, to eat ginger, and to play with the writing-brushes, while he sat and smiled, or

taught me how to write certain characters with the brushes—Courtesy, Kindness, Tranquillity. I was ten; he was as old as the Mountains of the Moon. And he was my friend. At no time was our friendship demonstrative. Though child and man may often talk seriously, on level terms, we could not talk, for at that time he knew only the pidjin of the shopkeeper's counter. Even later, when he learned more words, he could never make a sentence; he would throw out four or five words, and I had to make the sentence myself.

It was at my fourth visit, I think, that he suddenly coughed, "Huh!" and said: "Why you 'ere?" When I understood the question I said: "I'm lonely." I don't know why I said that. It wasn't true. I had dozens of friends, young and grown up, about Carfax Street. It was a silly thing to say, but it came out; and his reply seemed to me even sillier. He said: "Huh! All time you that. All time. One time plenty people you. No can. All time that."

For twelve years, in all times of sorrow or perplexity, I went to him, and I was not lonely. While talk was impossible, talk wasn't necessary. He knew. A barren friendship, perhaps. It had nothing of service or sacrifice or common interest to endue it, or the casual fellowship of mutual minds, mutual creeds, mutual race. He showed neither pleasure nor irritation at seeing me, nor delight in my company. If I came or stayed away, it was no matter.

But for me it was richer than any friendship I have since known. From every one of his silences I took away something soothing and exhilarating. I felt that while I was in that dusty, acrid shop nothing could touch me; nothing could exalt or grieve. The world of blessings and bruises was beating around and against me, but its waters fell from me. I knew in that shop what some people seek in church and others seek in taverns. Those silences were glimpses; repetitions of that moment when he held out the ginger and I looked through his window as through the window of that Northern King. Every new life is moulded upon the pattern of the old. That pattern is a star

whose points touch the outer rims; and it is in the passing of these points that we meet those moments that are our corners and know ourselves. That was the meaning of his friendship; through him I peeped and saw and understood the beauty and sorrow of things. He opened the outer door, and for one moment he showed me the inner door and gave me its key.

But I could not turn it. And though I have tried and tried, I never have turned it. Never has the magic of the artist guided my hand to help me to show what I knew in that moment when the ginger was held out to me.

ANZIA YEZIERSKA

Essayist, story-writer

At the age of sixteen, Miss Yezierska came from her home in Russia to America. Like so many immigrants, she did not find "the land of promise" all that she had been led to expect. She worked in sweat shops to gain a meagre living—but these struggles she tells adequately in her essay, "How I Found America." In the face of so many difficulties, it is amazing that her ambitions did not die.

Her stories of the ghetto of New York are full of the things that she has seen and experienced.

"In my book *Children of Loneliness* . . . is an introductory chapter, 'Mostly About Myself.' There I've literally torn the heart out of my body and showed my readers what a frightful handicap it is to be driven to write without knowing how. . . . That chapter will answer all your questions to me."

—Anzia Yezierska.

HOW I FOUND AMERICA [1]

Every breath I drew was a breath of fear, every shadow a stifling shock, every footfall struck on my heart like the heavy boot of the Cossack. On a low stool in the middle of the only room in our mud hut sat my father, his red beard falling over the Book of Isaiah, open before him. On the tile stove, on the benches that were our beds, even on the earthen floor, sat the neighbors' children, learning from him the ancient poetry of the Hebrew race. As he chanted, the children repeated:

> The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness,
> Prepare ye the way of the Lord.
> Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
>
> Every valley shall be exalted,
> And every mountain and hill shall be made low,
> And the crooked shall be made straight,
> And the rough places plain,
> And the glory of God shall be revealed,
> And all flesh shall see it together.

Undisturbed by the swaying and chanting of teacher and pupils, old Kakah, our speckled hen, with her brood of chicks, strutted and pecked at the potato-peelings that fell from my mother's lap as she prepared our noon meal.

I stood at the window watching the road, lest the Cossack come upon us unawares to enforce the ukase of the czar, which would tear the last bread from our mouths: "No *chadir* (Hebrew school) shall be held in a room used for cooking and sleeping."

With one eye I watched ravenously my mother cutting chunks of black bread. At last the potatoes were ready. She poured them out of an iron pot into a wooden bowl and placed them in the center of the table.

[1] Reprinted from *The Century Magazine*, by permission of the author and publishers.

Instantly the swaying and chanting ceased. The children rushed forward. The fear of the Cossack was swept away from my heart by the fear that the children would get my potato, and deserting my post, with a shout of joy I seized my portion and bit a huge mouthful of mealy delight.

At that moment the door was driven open by the blow of an iron heel. The Cossack's whip swished through the air. Screaming, we scattered. The children ran out—our livelihood with them.

"*Oi weh!*" wailed my mother, clutching at her breast, "is there a God over us and sees all this?"

With grief-glazed eyes my father muttered a broken prayer as the Cossack thundered the ukase: "A thousand-ruble fine, or a year in prison, if you are ever found again teaching children where you're eating and sleeping."

"*Gottuniu!*" then pleaded my mother, "would you tear the last skin from our bones? Where else should we be eating and sleeping? Or should we keep *chadir* in the middle of the road? Have we houses with separate rooms like the czar?"

Ignoring my mother's protests, the Cossack strode out of the hut. My father sank into a chair, his head bowed in the silent grief of the helpless.

My mother wrung her hands.

"God from the world, is there no end to our troubles? When will the earth cover me and my woes?"

I watched the Cossack disappear down the road. All at once I saw the whole village running toward us. I dragged my mother to the window to see the approaching crowd.

"*Gevalt!* What more is falling over our heads?" she cried in alarm.

Masheh Mindel, the water-carrier's wife, headed a wild procession. The baker, the butcher, the shoemaker, the tailor, the goatherd, the workers in the fields, with their wives and children pressed toward us through a cloud of dust.

Masheh Mindel, almost fainting, fell in front of the doorway.

"A letter from America!" she gasped.

"A letter from America!" echoed the crowd as they snatched the letter from her and thrust it into my father's hands.

"Read, read!" they shouted tumultuously.

My father looked through the letter, his lips uttering no sound. In breathless suspense the crowd gazed at him. Their eyes shown with wonder and reverence for the only man in the village who could read. Masheh Mindel crouched at his feet, her neck stretched toward him to catch each precious word of the letter.

To my worthy wife, Masheh Mindel, and to my loving son, Sushkah Feivel, and to my darling daughter, the apple of my eye, the pride of my life, Tzipkeleh!

Long years and good luck on you! May the blessings from heaven fall over your beloved heads and save you from all harm!

First I come to tell you that I am well and in good health. May I hear the same from you!

Secondly, I am telling you that my sun is beginning to shine in America. I am becoming a person—a business man. I have for myself a stand in the most crowded part of America, where people are as thick as flies and every day is like market-day at a fair. My business is from bananas and apples. The day begins with my push-cart full of fruit, and the day never ends before I can count up at least two dollars' profit. That means four rubles. Stand before your eyes, I, Gedalyah Mindel, four rubles a day; twenty-four rubles a week!

"Gedalyah Mindel, the water-carrier, twenty-four rubles a week!" The words leaped like fire in the air.

We gazed at his wife, Masheh Mindel, a dried-out bone of a woman.

"Masheh Mindel, with a husband in America, Masheh Mindel, the wife of a man earning twenty-four rubles a week! The sky is falling to the earth!"

We looked at her with new reverence. Already she was a being from another world. The dead, sunken eyes became alive with light. The worry for bread that had tightened the skin of her cheek-bones was gone. The sudden surge of happiness filled out her features, flushing her face as with wine. The two starved children clinging to her skirts, dazed with excitement, only

dimly realized their good fortune in the envious glances of the others. But the letter went on:

Thirdly, I come to tell you, white bread and meat I eat every day, just like the millionaires. Fourthly, I have to tell you that I am no more Gedalyah Mindel. *Mister* Mindel they call me in America. Fifthly, Masheh Mindel and my dear children, in America there are no mud huts where cows and chickens and people live all together. I have for myself a separate room, with a closed door, and before any one can come to me, he must knock, and I can say, "Come in," or "Stay out," like a king in a palace. Lastly, my darling family and people of the village of Sukovoly, there is no czar in America.

My father paused. The hush was stifling. "No czar—no czar in America!" Even the little babies repeated the chant, "No czar in America!"

In America they ask everybody who should be the President. And I, Gedalyah Mindel, when I take out my citizen's papers, will have as much to say who shall be our next President as Mr. Rockefeller, the greatest millionaire. Fifty rubles I am sending you for your ship-ticket to America. And may all Jews who suffer in Golluth from ukases and pogroms live yet to lift up their heads like me, Gedalyah Mindel, in America.

Fifty rubles! A ship-ticket to America! That so much good luck should fall on one head! A savage envy bit us. Gloomy darts from narrowed eyes stabbed Masheh Mindel. Why should not we, too, have a chance to get away from this dark land! has not every heart the same hunger for America, the same longing to live and laugh and breathe like a free human being? America is for all. Why should only Masheh Mindel and her children have a chance to the New World?

Murmuring and gesticulating, the crowd dispersed. Every one knew every one else's thought—how to get to America. What could they pawn? From where could they borrow for a ship-ticket?

Silently, we followed my father back into the hut from which the Cossack had driven us a while before. We children looked from mother to father and from father to mother.

"*Gottunieu!* the czar himself is pushing us to America by this last ukase." My mother's face lighted up the hut like a lamp.

"*Meshugeneh Yideneh!*" admonished my father. "Always your head in the air. What—where—America? With what money? Can dead people lift themselves up to dance?"

"Dance?" The samovar and the brass pots reëchoed my mother's laughter. "I could dance myself over the waves of the ocean to America."

In amazed delight at my mother's joy, we children rippled and chuckled with her. My father paced the room, his face dark with dread for the morrow.

"Empty hands, empty pockets; yet it dreams itself in you—America," he said.

"Who is poor who has hopes on America?" flaunted my mother.

"Sell my red-quilted petticoat that grandmother left for my dowry," I urged in excitement.

"Sell the feather-beds, sell the somavar," chorused the children.

"Sure, we can sell everything—the goat and all the winter things," added my mother. "It must be always summer in America."

I flung my arms around my brother, and he seized Bessie by the curls, and we danced around the room, crazy with joy.

"Beggars!" said my laughing mother. "Why are you so happy with yourselves? How will you go to America without a shirt on your back, without shoes on your feet?"

But we ran out into the road, shouting and singing:

"We'll sell everything we got; we're going to America. White bread and meat we'll eat every day in America, in America!"

That very evening we brought Berel Zalman, the usurer, and showed him all our treasures, piled up in the middle of the hut.

"Look! All these fine feather-beds, Berel Zalman!" urged my mother. "This grand fur coat came from Nijny itself. My grandfather bought it at the fair."

I held up my red-quilted petticoat, the supreme sacrifice of

my ten-year-old life. Even my father shyly pushed forward the samovar.

"It can hold enough tea for the whole village," he declared.

"Only a hundred rubles for them all!" pleaded my mother, "only enough to lift us to America! Only one hundred little rubles!"

"A hundred rubles! *Pfui!*" sniffed the pawnbroker. "Forty is overpaid. Not even thirty is it worth."

But, coaxing and cajoling, my mother got a hundred rubles out of him.

Steerage, dirty bundles, foul odors, seasick humanity; but I saw and heard nothing of the foulness and ugliness about me. I floated in showers of sunshine; visions upon visions of the New World opened before me. From lip to lip flowed the golden legend of the golden country:

"In America you can say what you feel, you can voice your thoughts in the open streets without fear of a Cossack."

"In America is a home for everybody. The land is your land, not, as in Russia, where you feel yourself a stranger in the village where you were born and reared, the village in which your father and grandfather lie buried."

"Everybody is with everybody alike in America. Christians and Jews are brothers together."

"An end to the worry for bread, an end to the fear of the bosses over you. Everybody can do what he wants with his life in America."

"There are no high or low in America. Even the President holds hands with Gedalyah Mindel."

"Plenty for all. Learning flows free, like milk and honey."

"Learning flows free." The words painted pictures in my mind. I saw before me free schools, free colleges, free libraries, where I could learn and learn and keep on learning. In our village was a school, but only for Christian children. In the schools of America I'd lift up my head and laugh and dance, a child with other children. Like a bird in the air, from sky to sky, from star to star, I'd soar and soar.

"Land! land!" came the joyous shout. All crowded and pushed on deck. They strained and stretched to get the first glimpse of the "golden country," lifting their children on their shoulders that they might see beyond them. Men fell on their knees to pray. Women hugged their babies and wept. Children danced. Strangers embraced and kissed like old friends. Old men and old women had in their eyes a look of young people in love. Age-old visions sang themselves in me, songs of freedom of an oppressed people. America! America!

Between buildings that loomed like mountains we struggled with our bundles, spreading around us the smell of the steerage. Up Broadway, under the bridge, and through the swarming streets of the Ghetto, we followed Gedalyah Mindel.

I looked about the narrow streets of squeezed-in stores and houses, ragged clothes, dirty bedding oozing out of the windows, ash-cans and garbage-cans cluttering the sidewalks. A vague sadness pressed down my heart, the first doubt of America.

"Where are the green fields and open spaces in America?" cried my heart. "Where is the golden country of my dreams?" A loneliness for the fragrant silence of the woods that lay beyond our mud hut welled up in my heart, a longing for the soft, responsive earth of our village streets. All about me was the hardness of brick and stone, the smells of crowded poverty.

"Here's your house, with separate rooms like a palace," said Gedalyah Mindel, and flung open the door of a dingy, airless flat.

"*Oi weh!*" cried my mother in dismay. "Where's the sunshine in America?" She went to the window and looked out at the blank wall of the next house. "*Gottunieu!* Like in a grave so dark!"

"It ain't so dark; it's only a little shady," said Gedalyah Mindel, and lighted the gas. "Look only!"—he pointed with pride to the dim gas-light—"No candles, no kerosene lamps, in America. You turn on a screw, and put to it a match, and you got it light like with sunshine."

Again the shadow fell over me, again the doubt of America. In America were rooms without sunlight; rooms to sleep in, to eat in, to cook in, but without sunshine, and Gedalyah Mindel was happy. Could I be satisfied with just a place to sleep in and eat in, and a door to shut people out, to take the place of sunlight? Or would I always need the sunlight to be happy? And where was there a place in America for me to play? I looked out into the alley below, and saw pale-faced children scrambling in the gutter. "Where is America?" cried my heart.

My eyes were shutting themselves with sleep. Blindly I felt for the buttons on my dress; and buttoning, I sank back in sleep again—the dead-weight sleep of utter exhaustion.

"Heart of mine," my mother's voice moaned above me, "father is already gone an hour. You know how they'll squeeze from you a nickel for every minute you're late. Quick only!"

I seized my bread and herring and tumbled down the stairs and out into the street. I ate running, blindly pressing through the hurrying throngs of workers, my haste and fear choking every mouthful. I felt a strangling in my throat as I neared the sweat-shop prison; all my nerves screwed together into iron hardness to endure the day's torture.

For an instant I hesitated as I faced the grated windows of the old building. Dirt and decay cried out from every crumbling brick. In the maw of the shop raged around me the roar and the clatter, the merciless grind, of the pounding machines. Half-maddened, half-deadened, I struggled to think, to feel, to remember. What am I? Who am I? Why am I here? I struggled in vain, bewildered and lost in a whirlpool of noise. "America—America, where was America?" it cried in my heart.

Then came the factory whistle, the slowing down of the machines, the shout of release hailing the noon hour. I woke as from a tense nightmare, a weary waking to pain. In the dark chaos of my brain reason began to dawn. In my stifled heart feelings began to pulse. The wound of my wasted life began to

throb and ache. With my childhood choked with drudgery, must my youth, too, die unlived?

Here were the odor of herring and garlic, the ravenous munching of food, laughter and loud, vulgar jokes. Was it only I who was so wretched? I looked at those around me. Were they happy or only insensible to their slavery? How could they laugh and joke? Why were they not torn with rebellion against this galling grind, the crushing, deadening movements of the body, where only hands live, and hearts and brains must die?

I felt a touch on my shoulder and looked up. It was Yetta Solomon, from the machine next to mine.

"Here's your tea."

I stared at her half-hearing.

"Ain't you going to eat nothing?"

"*Oi weh*, Yetta! I can't stand it!" The cry broke from me. "I didn't come to America to turn into a machine. I came to America to make from myself a person. Does America want only my hands, only the strength of my body, not my heart, not my feelings, my thoughts?"

"Our heads ain't smart enough," said Yetta, practically. "We ain't been to school, like the American-born."

"What for did I come to America but to go to school, to learn, to think, to make something beautiful from my life?"

"'Sh! 'Sh! The boss! the boss!" came the warning whisper.

A sudden hush fell over the shop as the boss entered. He raised his hand. There was breathless silence. The hard, red face with the pig's eyes held us under its sickening spell. Again I saw the Cossack and heard him thunder the ukase. Prepared for disaster, the girls paled as they cast at one another sidelong, frightened glances.

"Hands," he addressed us, fingering the gold watch-chain that spread across his fat stomach, "it's slack in the other trades, and I can get plenty girls begging themselves to work for half what you're getting; only I ain't a skinner. I always give my hands a show to earn their bread. From now on I'll give you

fifty cents a dozen shirts instead of seventy-five, but I'll give you night-work, so you needn't lose nothing." And he was gone.

The stillness of death filled the shop. Everyone felt the heart of the other bleed with her own helplessness. A sudden sound broke the silence. A woman sobbed chokingly. It was Balah Rifkin, a widow with three children.

"*Oi weh!*"—she tore at her scrawny neck,—"the blood-sucker! the thief! How will I give them to eat, my babies, my hungry little lambs!"

"Why do we let him choke us?"

"Twenty-five cents less on a dozen—how will we be able to live?"

"He tears the last skin from our bones."

"Why didn't nobody speak up to him?"

Something in me forced me forward. I forgot for the moment how my whole family depended on my job. I forgot that my father was out of work and we had received a notice to move for unpaid rent. The helplessness of the girls around me drove me to strength.

"I'll go to the boss," I cried, my nerves quivering with fierce excitement. "I'll tell him Balah Rifkin has three hungry mouths to feed."

Pale, hungry faces thrust themselves toward me, thin, knotted hands reached out, starved bodies pressed close about me.

"Long years on you!" cried Balah Rifkin, drying her eyes with a corner of her shawl.

"Tell him about my old father and me, his only bread-giver," came from Bessie Sopolsky, a gaunt-faced girl with a hacking cough.

"And I got no father or mother, and four of them younger than me hanging on my neck." Jennie Feist's beautiful young face was already scarred with the gray worries of age.

America, as the oppressed of all lands have dreamed America to be, and America as it is, flashed before me, a banner of fire. Behind me I felt masses pressing, thousands of immigrants; thousands upon thousands crushed by injustice, lifted me as on wings.

I entered the boss's office without a shadow of fear. I was not I; the wrongs of my people burned through me till I felt the very flesh of my body a living flame of rebellion. I faced the boss.

"We can't stand it," I cried. "Even as it is we're hungry. Fifty cents a dozen would starve us. Can you, a Jew, tear the bread from another Jew's mouth?"

"You fresh mouth, you! Who are you to learn me my business?"

"Weren't you yourself once a machine slave, your life in the hands of your boss?"

"You loafer! Money for nothing you want! The minute they begin to talk English they get flies in their nose. A black year on you, trouble-maker! I'll have no smart heads in my shop! Such freshness! Out you get! Out from my shop!"

Stunned and hopeless, the wings of my courage broken, I groped my way back to them—back to eager, waiting faces, back to the crushed hearts aching with mine.

As I opened the door, they read our defeat in my face.

"Girls,"—I held out my hands,—"he's fired me." My voice died in the silence. Not a girl stirred. Their heads only bent closer over their machines.

"Here, you, get yourself out of here!" the boss thundered at me. "Bessie Sopolsky and you, Balah Rifkin, take out her machine into the hall. I want no big-mouthed *Americanerins* in my shop."

Bessie Sopolsky and Balah Rifkin, their eyes black with tragedy, carried out my machine. Not a hand was held out to me, not a face met mine. I felt them shrink from me as I passed them on my way out.

In the street I found I was crying. The new hope that had flowed in me so strongly bled out of my veins. A moment before, our unity had made me believe us so strong, and now I saw each alone, crushed, broken. What were they all but crawling worms, servile grubbers for bread?

And then in the very bitterness of my resentment the hardness broke in me. I saw the girls through their own eyes, as if I

were inside of them. What else could they have done? Was not an immediate crust of bread for Balah Rifkin's children more urgent than truth, more vital than honor? Could it be that they ever had dreamed of America as I had dreamed? Had their faith in America wholly died in them? Could my faith be killed as theirs had been?

Gasping from running, Yetta Solomon flung her arms around me.

"You golden heart! I sneaked myself out from the shop only to tell you I'll come to see you to-night. I'd give the blood from under my nails for you, only I got to run back. I got to hold my job. My mother—"

I hardly saw or heard her. My senses were stunned with my defeat. I walked on in a blind daze, feeling that any moment I would drop in the middle of the street from sheer exhaustion. Every hope I had clung to, every human stay, every reality, was torn from under me. Was it then only a dream, a mirage of the hungry-hearted people in the desert lands of oppression, this age-old faith in America?

Again I saw the mob of dusty villagers crowding about my father as he read the letter from America, their eager faces thrust out, their eyes blazing with the same hope, the same faith, that had driven me on. Had the starved villagers of Sukovoly lifted above their sorrows a mere rainbow vision that led them—where? Where? To the stifling submission of the sweat-shop or the desperation of the streets!

"God! God!" My eyes sought the sky, praying, "where—where is America?"

Times changed. The sweat-shop conditions that I had lived through had become a relic of the past. Wages had doubled, tripled, and went up higher and higher, and the working-day became shorter and shorter. I began to earn enough to move my family uptown into a sunny, airy flat with electricity and telephone service. I even saved up enough to buy a phonograph and a piano.

My knotted nerves relaxed. At last I had become free from the worry for bread and rent, but I was not happy. A more restless discontent than ever before ate out my heart. Freedom from stomach needs only intensified the needs of my soul.

I ached and clamored for America. Higher wages and shorter hours of work, mere physical comfort, were not yet America. I had dreamed that America was a place where the heart could grow big with giving. Though outwardly I had become prosperous, life still forced me into an existence of mere getting and getting.

Ach! how I longed for a friend, a real American friend, some one to whom I could express the thoughts and feelings that choked me! In the Bronx, the uptown Ghetto, I felt myself farther away from the spirit of America than ever before. In the East Side the people had yet alive in their eyes the old, old dreams of America, the America that would release the age-old hunger to give; but in the prosperous Bronx good eating and good sleeping replaced the spiritual need for giving. The chase for dollars and diamonds deadened the dreams that had once brought them to America.

More and more the all-consuming need for a friend possessed me. In the street, in the cars, in the subways, I was always seeking, ceaselessly seeking for eyes, a face, the flash of a smile that would be light in my darkness.

I felt sometimes that I was only burning out my heart for a shadow, an echo, a wild dream, but I couldn't help it. Nothing was real to me but my hope of finding a friend. America was not America to me unless I could find an American that would make America real.

The hunger of my heart drove me to the night-school. Again my dream flamed. Again America beckoned. In the school there would be education, air, life for my cramped-in spirit. I would learn to think, to form the thoughts that surged formless in me. I would find the teacher that would make me articulate.

I joined the literature class. They were reading *The De Coverley Papers*. Filled with insatiate thirst, I drank in every line

with the feeling that any moment I would get to the fountain-heart of revelation. Night after night I read with tireless devotion. But of what? The manners and customs of the eighteenth century, of people two hundred years dead.

One evening, after a month's attendance, when the class had dwindled from fifty to four, and the teacher began scolding us who were present for those who were absent, my bitterness broke.

"Do you know why all the girls are dropping away from the class? It's because they have too much sense than to waste themselves on *The De Coverley Papers*. Us four girls are four fools. We could learn more in the streets. It's dirty and wrong, but it's life. What are *The De Coverley Papers?* Dry dust fit for the ash-can."

"Perhaps you had better tell the principal your ideas of the standard classics," she scoffed, white with rage.

"All right," I snapped, and hurried down to the principal's office.

I swung open the door.

"I just want to tell you why I'm leaving. I—"

"Won't you come in?" The principal rose and placed a chair for me near her desk. "Now tell me all." She leaned forward with an inviting interest.

I looked up, and met the steady gaze of eyes shining with light. In a moment all my anger fled. *The De Coverley Papers* were forgotten. The warm friendliness of her face held me like a familiar dream. I couldn't speak. It was as if the sky suddenly opened in my heart.

"Do go on," she said, and gave me a quick nod. "I want to hear."

The repression of centuries rushed out of my heart. I told her everything—of the mud hut in Sukovoly where I was born, of the czar's pogroms, of the constant fear of the Cossack, of Gedalyah Mindel's letter, of our hopes in coming to America, and my search for an American who would make America real.

"I am so glad you came to me," she said. And after a pause, "You can help me."

"Help you?" I cried. It was the first time that an American suggested that I could help her.

"Yes, indeed. I have always wanted to know more of that mysterious, vibrant life—the immigrant. You can help me know my girls. You have so much to give—"

"Give—that's what I was hungering and thirsting all these years—to give out what's in me. I was dying in the unused riches of my soul."

"I know; I know just what you mean," she said, putting her hand on mine.

My whole being seemed to change in the warmth of her comprehension. "I have a friend," it sang itself in me. "I have a friend!"

"And you are a born American?" I asked. There was none of that sure, all right look of the Americans about her.

"Yes, indeed. My mother, like so many mothers,"—and her eyebrows lifted humorously whimsical,—"claims we're descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers, and that one of our lineal ancestors came over in the *Mayflower*."

"For all your mother's pride in the Pilgrim Fathers, you yourself are as plain from the heart as an immigrant."

"Weren't the Pilgrim Fathers immigrants two hundred years ago?"

She took from her desk a book and read to me.

Then she opened her arms to me, and breathlessly I felt myself drawn to her. Bonds seemed to burst. A suffusion of light filled my being. Great choirings lifted me in space. I walked out unseeingly.

All the way home the words she read flamed before me: "We go forth all to seek America. And in the seeking we create her. In the quality of our search shall be the nature of the America that we create."

So all those lonely years of seeking and praying were not in vain. How glad I was that I had not stopped at the husk, a good job, a good living! Through my inarticulate groping and reaching out I had found the soul, the spirit of America.

AMONG EMINENT INFORMAL ESSAYISTS

CHARLES S. BROOKS

Essayist

Mr. Brooks, a business man of Cleveland, pursues essay writing as his avocation. Paradoxically, however, his essays impress one as having been written by a leisurely observer who comments in his own personal way on the things about him. That is all well and good, for that is the art of the familiar essayist. Mr. Brooks writes of things that he sees in England and America and succeeds in making his reader see more in the commonplace than he has seen before. One has only to read the titles of his books—*A Thread of English Road*, *Chimney Pot Papers*, etc.—or the titles of his chapters—"Once There Was a Furnace Boy," "On Playing the Trombone," "A Dull Chapter to be Skipped," etc.—to become aware of something of his style and the personality behind it.

"Lazy Ink-Pots," from *Like Summer's Cloud*, has been chosen for an example of his work rather than those he mentions in the following letter, not because it is better (it is not), nor because it is more characteristic (it is not that either), but because it conveys so excellently that almost intangible spirit of the familiar essay and, at the same time, suggests the broad range of subject matter and the manner of treatment of that form of writing. The student should read also those chapters that Mr. Brooks mentions for valuable advice on the business of writing.

"In two of my books, I have written papers that contain what little I have to say on the subject of English composition. The first of these is in the volume, *A Thread of English Road*, entitled 'To be Read Only by Serious,

Stupid Persons.' The second is in the volume *Like Summer's Cloud* which is entitled 'These Years of Freedom.' In both of these papers I have tried to say among other things that in my experience it is the rewriting of a paper that is the best training. I have tried to say, also, that merely to express yourself clearly is a very small part of the writer's job and that it has about the same relation to good writing as a kodak picture has to art."

—Charles S. Brooks.

LAZY INK-POTS [1]

When I think of what easy remnants essays may be made I wonder that every lukewarm pen does not engage its leisure in throwing them together. A man of moderate ingenuity has but to cast about in nearest circumstance to find matter for his thought. If his study window looks upon a garden, a score of subjects will rise from grass and flowering bush to crowd his ink-pot. He has but to hold himself in leisure, then dip and start. Perhaps upon the lawn a sundial meets his eye and, in speculation of the wise saw that is carved upon the bronze, his thoughts will run through all eternity to find the edge of time. *Horas non numero nisi serenas!* It was such a motto—I count but the sunny hours—that sent Hazlitt through a dozen pages of delightful meditation that sing like a drowsy tune of summer. The flowering of a jonquil or the drooping of a lilac guides us to the running of the year. By what magic does nature sort its colors from the sun and tip its brush with yellow for the daffodil? By what favor does the iris get its motley to racket through the month of June? Or if stars be out, we sit in wonder at the everlasting whipcord that sends us spinning through alternate day and night. The flash of Orion on its breathless journey of a million years provides us argument for eternity.

For myself, possessing a pen of but a soft and modest nib, this grand theology does not tempt me. My own window, also, rises from a garden, but it is the trivial matters that stir my fancy. My thoughts vibrate, as it were, to a gentler broadcasting out of space. A rooster's braggart note, the roll of the city's grumbling traffic as if it grudged its hours of work, the gardener's rake scratching at the gravel, a far-off lawn mower whirring with a

[1] From *Like Summer's Cloud.* Reprinted by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.

locust's deeper voice—these sounds trickle to my thought. Or perhaps a noonday bell turns the world backward for a score of years and the children of my recollection tumble out of school to a long vacation. For three months of careless days it will not matter whether Columbus sailed from Italian or Spanish port, or who it was who looked with wild surmise, silent, upon a peak in Darien. I fling again my battered books to discard and romp to freedom. I feel the hot stones on my bare feet, the cool caress of shadowy grass. For a summer afternoon I lie in dreams of far adventure on the tossing seas. A dozen such topics at a noonday bell come racing to my lazy pen.

I have already found engaging trifles for an essay in a Monday's wash as it swings on a neighbor's line, and a bit of fluttering lace has been a prologue to a paragraph on vanity. I have observed, also, how a stiff wind tempts the garments to a lively one-step, and have cast my thoughts upon a dance that takes thus its rhythm from the sky. The charming Mrs. X———, who offers the street scarcely her timid ankle, on a reckless Monday shows a dozen brazen stockings to the garter; and ribbons that have done no worse than play at peek-a-boo now stare me out of countenance. I once read a scandalous novel in which a stolen glance across a hedge at an intimate bit of windy silk sent the hero on a golden quest to find its owner. He pilfered the dainty garment from the line and offered it, like Cinderella's slipper, among his whole acquaintance for a fitting.

A friend of mine confesses that she once planned a little play for children, which was to open in a garden with a stretch of linen between the posts. Her plot provided that these garments were prisoners in the castle of a hideous giant, shrunk by magic to this thin shadow of themselves. Certainly they flapped sadly and languished for a ransom. But presently, as the play proceeds, a good fairy restores them by a powerful hocus-pocus and unclasps the wooden pins that hold them bound. Doublet-and-hose, quite bellied out with summer breeze, now proves to be the hero. By a cunning stratagem he ducks the horrid laundress in her tub until the bubbles cease to rise; then, turning

to a pretty petticoat, he asks her to name the happy day. Our lovers finally escape across the battlements in a gale of wind and scamper to a parson. The giant—for the play has a pleasant ending—the giant, in the hurry of pursuit, gets tangled in a clothesline and dangles in a fatal noose as the curtain falls.

But perhaps an aspirant toward letters has not the luck to write upon a Monday when posts have this harvest of suggestion. If so, an agreeable paper may be contrived out of any knothole in his garden fence. Did I not myself in beardless days through such a chink spy the gracious Messalina when she came among us on a visit? Her cool green dress that scarcely reached her knees—for then our careless world was young—quite shook my brain as I took her piercing arrow in my heart.

Since the night of summer madness when Pyramus kissed Thisbe through a similar crevice—an indiscretion beyond Messalina and myself—these crannies have been a steady property in tales of love. I have no doubt but that Montague and Capulet had a wooden fence between their gardens—that Tristan and Isolde, also, met in such circumstance eye to eye. And yet I commend the nimble Mr. Winkle who disdained a narrow chink and leaped the wall to the panting arms of his Arabella. Mr. Pickwick, as I recall, was an excellent chaperon and retired meantime behind a lilac bush until a kiss could seal their bargain. Or rather, on second recollection, he flashed a lantern on the alley till it was thought to be a comet out of space. Some day, when I try my hand at fiction of this sentimental sort, I shall hang a moon above an apple tree and let my lovers scheme their elopement discreetly through a knothole.

Need I do more than mention the essays that may be made from the traffic of the summer clouds, of the stars that decorate my garden in the night? The moon itself would cramp a heavy volume. Like a shrewd watchman of the night it declines to hold sharply to the clock for a better chance of pouncing down on shady mischief.

Nor is a window on a garden a necessity in a quest of subject. If the casement of an essayist looks out upon a crowded city the

fancy skips among the towers and buildings. It plunges through a hundred scuttles and seeks comedy and tragedy from room to room. It rolls back the roofs and treads the corridors with silent observation. Since Teufelsdröckh meditated on a golden night at his lofty window, this has been the outpost of high philosophy, and an attic window, since time began, has been a coign of vantage for a poet. We think that it is poverty that drives them beneath the roof. Rather, they look on a larger sky and launch here a sonnet for higher flight.

But perhaps a writer has been too long inside his study. If he chew more than an hour upon an unproductive pencil he should bellow for his boots and seek the air. And right here, despite all facts to the contrary, I argue that most essays of a pleasant trivial sort are composed in rougher draft in the streets and fields. Once in a while, no doubt, a ponderous Macaulay may smother himself indoors with his finger on a score of books; but smaller writers need the sun and wind. Lamb, I acknowledge, has tried to persuade us that he wrote behind a shutter. "The enfranchised quill," he asserts, ". . . frisks and curvets so at its ease over the flowery carpet-ground of a midnight dissertation." Clearly, he thought that he worked indoors. But the best of him, I am confident, was composed on the London cobbles 'twixt India House and Temple Gardens, dodging at the curb a nimble cab. I have walked this crowded course myself, hoping that some magic might have escaped his pen for my stupid gleaning. But Stevenson has confessed to the notebook that he carried in his pocket; and Hazlitt, by implication. There is fair evidence that most good essays are started on the hoof and merely polished at a desk. Addison I take to have been a sedentary kind of person who took his ease in a tavern chair with a tap of liquor handy; and yet the subjects of his papers are so usually from the streets that I think he must have walked beyond his acknowledgment.

There is a touch of the study in Leslie Stephen—too many facts to be gained entirely on the curb—and yet the man was a champion walker and took his twenty miles in an afternoon.

And certainly a writer with Thackeray's long legs could not keep them stuffed always beneath a desk. Essayists, you will find, are uncommonly fond of old hats and walking sticks—and of old boots especially, for a new and squeaky pair breaks the measure of a thought.

I find that a leisured stride is the best rhythm to start an essay, for it is by an easy vibration and tuning of the legs that the message flashes with least interference out of space. Hurried fiction doubtless fits to a quick patter of the feet—just as an epic demands a drawl—but thirty-three inches toe to toe, with legs in deliberate pendulum like a tall old-fashioned clock, is suited to an essayist's vagrant paragraph. Swift, who was himself an essayist, has told us somewhere precisely the number of steps between his lodging and his coffee house. It may have varied with his humor, but he proclaims the average. I recommend to writers that they lay a careful measure on their course and give each stride an easy length. In the bitterness of his usual mood, Swift, I think, scanted a thirty inches and trotted with ugly patter suited to his venom.

Postmen and bundle boys, with but a hint to start them, might cast off an essay once a month without slacking against their pay; and when I have seen a peripatetic ragman of philosophic countenance—his whiskers are a foul disguise—I have wondered whether he were not an essayist, prowling at back doors for cheap material. His cry of paper-rags may be but a blind to let him in the cellar where he will rummage for a subject.

If common folk of business, society, and the deep professions knew how thievishly an essayist steals their words and uses them with the thin disguising of phrase, they would be on better guard. I have myself—although indifferently honest in other matters—rifled a dinner party and sold it out for a penny to the word. Theft from books is quite another thing, but an idea often starts from the shoulders of another's thought. If it pursues an honest independent path it keeps within the law; but sometimes, because of a prolonged stewing in the brain it mixes

with native stuff and it is hard to know the true title of the property. In purest innocence one becomes a thief and deserves the gallows.

It may be folly to expose the subject to my rivals—cunning fellows of the ink-pot, eager at a hint—yet at my first leisure I plan to draft a paper on all children's games that are played upon the street. I have certain shrewd remarks to make on tops and marbles and all the varieties of hopscotch that are chalked on sidewalks. But chiefly I shall sit in a vacant lot around the corner where I shall watch a baseball game from end to end to recruit the vigor of my vocabulary.

Why, therefore, in the name of common sense, should one sweat upon a novel, and foam and fidget to get all the stubborn parts to fit—plot, character, and situation? It takes brains to build a persuasive villain and to throw a heroine into jeopardy for a happy rescue. And when you have brought out the old tricks from their box and have set them together with great labor; when you have sold the manuscript, which itself alone is a dirty job with many disappointments; then at last, to your disgust, you will find a hundred novels issued in the month that are better than yours—really not better, of course, but of better favor to the unlettered mob. Six months pass and your dusty overstock, unloaded by the publisher, will be neglected at fifty cents a copy on the bargain table.

It is far better to sit in pleasant leisure at your window and weave a paragraph from the small excitement of your garden—to speculate on clouds and think them treasure ships that gallop from the Indias. If no editor buys your pages it will not matter much, for the pay at best is small and the real profit lies in the pleasure gained by weaving thought to a gracious phrase.

GILBERT K. CHESTERTON

Essayist, story-writer, critic

Thinking of contemporary British prose without Mr. Chesterton is impossible. Though they are so totally different in their points of view and manners of criticism, his is a name to be respected along with those of Mr. Shaw and Mr. Wells. Although he enters into the field of controversy as speaker or writer in a formal way, he is represented here as the familiar essayist and critic of life. Like the good familiar essayist he hides his comments beneath apparent nonsense. He writes of "tremendous trifles" with an emphasis on *tremendous*.

These fleeting sketches . . . amount to no more than a sort of sporadic diary—a diary recording one day in twenty which happened to stick in the fancy—the only kind of diary the author has ever been able to keep. Even that diary he could only keep by keeping it in public, for bread and cheese. But trivial as are the topics, they are not utterly without a connecting thread of motive. As the reader's eye strays, with hearty relief, from these pages, it probably alights on something, a bed-post or a lamp-post, a window-blind or a wall. It is a thousand to one that the reader is looking at something that he has never seen: that is, never realized. He could not write an essay on such a post or wall: he does not know what the post or wall mean. He could not even write the synopsis of an essay; as "The Bed-Post; Its Significance—Security Essential to Idea of Sleep—Night Felt as Infinite—Need of

Monumental Architecture," and so on. He could not sketch in outline his theoretic attitude towards window-blinds, even in the form of a summary. "The Window-Blind—Its Analogy to the Curtain and Veil—Is Modesty Natural?—Worship of and Avoidance of the Sun, etc., etc." None of us think enough of these things on which the eye rests. But don't let us let the eye rest. Why should the eye be so lazy? Let us exercise the eye until it learns to see the startling facts that run across the landscape as plain as a painted fence. Let us be ocular athletes. Let us learn to write essays on a stray cat or a coloured cloud. I have attempted some such thing in what follows; but anyone else may do it better, if anyone else will only try. —G. K. CHESTERTON, from Preface to *Tremendous Trifles*.

WHAT I FOUND IN MY POCKET[1]

Once when I was very young I met one of those men who have made the Empire what it is—a man in an astracan coat, with an astracan moustache—a tight, black, curly moustache. Whether he put on the moustache with the coat or whether his Napoleonic will enabled him not only to grow a moustache in the usual place, but also to grow little moustaches all over his clothes, I do not know. I only remember that he said to me the following words: "A man can't get on nowadays by hanging about with his hands in his pockets." I made reply with the quite obvious flippancy that perhaps a man got on by having his hands in other people's pockets; whereupon he began to argue about Moral Evolution, so I suppose what I said had some truth in it. But the incident now comes back to me, and connects itself with another incident—if you can call it an incident—which happened to me only the other day.

I have only once in my life picked a pocket, and then (perhaps through some absent-mindedness) I picked my own. My act can really with some reason be so described. For in taking things out of my own pocket I had at least one of the more tense and quivering emotions of the thief; I had a complete ignorance and a profound curiosity as to what I should find there. Perhaps it would be the exaggeration of eulogy to call me a tidy person. But I can always pretty satisfactorily account for all my possessions. I can always tell where they are, and what I have done with them, so long as I can keep them out of my pockets. If once anything slips into those unknown abysses, I wave it a sad Virgilian farewell. I suppose that the things that I have dropped into my pockets are still there; the same pre-

[1] Reprinted from *Tremendous Trifles*, pp. 112–118. Copyright by Dodd, Mead and Company, Inc.

sumption applies to the things that I have dropped into the sea. But I regard the riches stored in both these bottomless chasms with the same reverent ignorance. They tell us that on the last day the sea will give up its dead; and I suppose that on the same occasion long strings of extraordinary things will come running out of my pockets. But I have quite forgotten what any of them are; and there is really nothing (excepting the money) that I shall be at all surprised at finding among them.

. . . . . .

Such at least has hitherto been my state of innocence. I here only wish briefly to recall the special, extraordinary, and hitherto unprecedented circumstances which led me in cold blood, and being of sound mind, to turn out my pockets. I was locked up in a third-class carriage for a rather long journey. The time was towards evening, but it might have been anything, for everything resembling earth or sky or light or shade was painted out as if with a great wet brush by an unshifting sheet of quite colourless rain. I had no books or newspapers. I had not even a pencil and a scrap of paper with which to write a religious epic. There were no advertisements on the walls of the carriage, otherwise I could have plunged into the study of them, for any collection of printed words is quite enough to suggest infinite complexities of mental ingenuity. When I find myself opposite the words "Sunlight Soap" I can exhaust all the aspects of Sun Worship, Apollo, and Summer poetry before I go on to the less congenial subject of soap. But there was no printed word or picture anywhere; there was nothing but blank wood inside the carriage and blank wet without. Now I deny most energetically that anything is, or can be, uninteresting. So I stared at the joints of the walls and seats, and began thinking hard on the fascinating subject of wood. Just as I had begun to realise why, perhaps, it was that Christ was a carpenter, rather than a bricklayer, or a baker, or anything else, I suddenly started upright, and remembered my pockets. I was carrying about with me an unknown treasury. I had a British Museum and a

South Kensington collection of unknown curios hung all over me in different places. I began to take the things out.

. . . . . .

The first thing I came upon consisted of piles and heaps of Battersea tram tickets. There were enough to equip a paper chase. They shook down in showers like confetti. Primarily, of course, they touched my patriotic emotions, and brought tears to my eyes; also they provided me with the printed matter I required, for I found on the back of them some short but striking little scientific essays about some kind of pill. Comparatively speaking, in my then destitution, those tickets might be regarded as a small but well-chosen scientific library. Should my railway journey continue (which seemed likely at the time) for a few months longer, I could imagine myself throwing myself into the controversial aspects of the pill, composing replies and rejoinders pro and con upon the data furnished to me. But after all it was the symbolic quality of the tickets that moved me most. For as certainly as the cross of St. George means English patriotism, those scraps of paper meant all that municipal patriotism which is now, perhaps, the greatest hope of England.

The next thing that I took out was a pocket-knife. A pocket-knife, I need hardly say, would require a thick book full of moral meditations all to itself. A knife typifies one of the most primary of those practical origins upon which as upon low, thick pillows all our human civilisation reposes. Metals, the mystery of the thing called iron and of the thing called steel, led me off half-dazed into a kind of dream. I saw into the intrails of dim, damp wood, where the first man among all the common stones found the strange stone. I saw a vague and violent battle, in which stone axes broke and stone knives were splintered against something shining and new in the hand of one desperate man. I heard all the hammers on all the anvils of the earth. I saw all the swords of Feudal and all the weals of Industrial war. For the knife is only a short sword; and the pocket-knife is a secret sword. I opened it and looked at that brilliant and terrible

tongue which we call a blade; and I thought that perhaps it was the symbol of the oldest of the needs of man. The next moment I knew that I was wrong; for the thing that came next out of my pocket was a box of matches. Then I saw fire, which is stronger even than steel, the old, fierce female thing, the thing we all love, but dare not touch.

The next thing I found was a piece of chalk; and I saw in it all the art and all the frescoes of the world. The next was a coin of a very modest value; and I saw in it not only the image and superscription of our own Cæsar, but all government and order since the world began. But I have not space to say what were the items in the long and splendid procession of poetical symbols that came pouring out. I cannot tell you all the things that were in my pocket. I can tell you one thing, however, that I could not find in my pocket. I allude to my railway ticket.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

Essayist, poet

Mr. Morley's essays, for which he is best known, have the quality of graceful style characteristic of the best English and American essayists, since some nineteenth century writers made the informal essay a real art. Mr. Morley was born of English parentage. His father, an Englishman and a Quaker, came in 1887 to this country as a distinguished professor of mathematics at Johns Hopkins. His mother is a musician and poet. In the intellectual atmosphere of Haverford, Mr. Morley grew up. Summers spent abroad and a period devoted to the pursuits of a Rhodes scholar completed his background for a literary career.

He has been on the staffs of Doubleday Page and Company, *The Ladies' Home Journal*, the Philadelphia *Evening Ledger*, and the New York *Evening Post*. For some time he has conducted a column in *The Saturday Review of Literature* under the title, "Bowling Green." In this column he writes familiar essays that are characteristic. Besides editing anthologies of modern essays that are familiar to almost every college freshman, he has published many collections of his own essays, notably *Pipefuls* and *Chimney Smoke*. *Where the Blue Begins* is a novel of imaginative fiction which one can read with delight as a fairy tale, or with more sophisticated pleasure as an ironic but good-humored study of mankind.

A writer received a letter from a friendly teacher of English in a university. "If you were to come to the University of ———," she wrote, "I should ask you to speak to my students in English composition. Not having that

opportunity, I have the temerity to ask whether you will write, through me to these young people who are learning to write in their own language. They will listen to you, whereas they are skeptical of textbook theory. . . . May I ask what you consider a specimen, whether a chapter or a paragraph, of your best writing?"

It is delightfully like sending to some manufacturer for samples of his "best" goods.

I often wonder how the notion got started that there is a mysterious kind of writing that is "best." Literature is not a commodity that can be valued by schedule at an appraising warehouse. It seems grotesque to have to insist on it again and again, but literature is the sudden expression of the fierce hilarious lives of human beings. The "best" writing is merely that which is most appropriate to the mood it yearns to convey. Is Milton "better" than Max Beerbohm? Is *Moby Dick* "better" than Poor Richard? People who think that literature is something created merely for classification are like the man in Chekhov's notebook: "he did not eat, he partook of food."—To that little volume, by the way (*Notebook of Anton Chekhov*, published by Huebsch, 1921) a student might well be directed, to see how literature emerges from life.

Obviously there are certain kinds of writing where careful judgment is more important than daintiness of expression. I have before me two clippings from a very able writer in the New York *World*. He says, writing about C. E. Montague's *The Right Place:*

> Its sales have been nothing like its quality merited. For conceits and whimsies, for random speculations and classic allusions, it is the most nugatory of excursions.

And writing about Amy Lowell's life of Keats he says:

It is a good book in every sense of the word. Not since P. P. Howe's work on Hazlitt have I read anything so rugged and nugatory.

These excellent comments are somewhat marred for me by the painful suspense as to whether this vigorous critic, whom I justly admire, knows the meaning of *nugatory*. Or another instance—equally nugatory: a cheerful compiler of biographical data about current novelists, in a memoir of William McFee, remarks:

He was born, without mishap, about the time *Copperfield*, a fat and fascinating volume, first issued from the press.

The sprightliness of this sentence is corrupted for me by the fact that *David Copperfield* was published in 1850, and Mr. McFee was born more than thirty years later.

Some of the worst writing ever seen appeared lately in evening newspapers that undertook, before the event, to describe a total eclipse of the sun. Reporters who had not time to view the actual scene, compiled imaginary descriptions of green and orange flames shooting across the sky. These violent attempts to describe what was not, naturally missed the pale and serene beauty of the genuine spectacle. This was bad writing because it was absurd and insincere. Where behavior is incommensurate with the true significance of the event, absurdity always begins to appear. At the same time there appeared—in the New York *World*—an editorial on the eclipse that showed true meditation:

Once all men would have tried by magic and sacrifice to alter the inexorable course of the shadow. Today they are going outdoors to enjoy the spectacle and to understand it more accurately. In the record of that change of attitude toward the universe lies the story of the emancipation of the human mind.

A free mind is an understanding mind, a mind that has found its place, judged its power and made its peace with the natural order of which it is a part. . . .

There, I venture to say, is good writing: good because it is honest, thoughtful, and not inflated beyond its intellectual coefficient.

Obviously it is a parlous task to teach literature, because literature is merely bouillon cubes of life; and those who are "studying" literature have, for the most part, not encountered life very closely. It is the problem of intimating to a child in a porcelain tub the cruel insignificance of the sea. The meaning of the tub is so plain, the meaning of the sea so obscure.

Near the room where I write this there is a tablet on a street-corner which tells how Poe read "The Raven" aloud to his luncheon-cronies and sold it simultaneously to three journals in the neighborhood. Just that little inscription helps to make "The Raven" a greater thing to me: for I see it not just as something I pattered at school but as sheets of charmingly graceful script (have you ever seen Poe's handwriting?) fluttering over a malt-stained table in an Ann Street tavern. I see it as the expression of some wild, ecstatic, impoverished dream that fretted that hot pale forehead. And what a sense of the dreadful reality of literature one had in the Morgan collection of manuscripts at the Public Library. The little stained scrawl of Shelley's "Indian Serenade," taken from the yacht after two months under water; Keats's will—those few poor lines: "All my estate consists in the hopes of the sale of books publish'd or unpublish'd," and the added wish that "my Taylor" (his generous publisher) be paid his few pounds; or Jane Austen writing to her sister some ingenious speculations on the planning of a new dress ("As I find the Muslin is not so wide as it used to be, some contrivance may be necessary.") Harry Fielding's receipt for £600 for *Tom*

Jones, Bozzy's letter to Temple confessing that he writes while "suffering severely for immorality." Swift rhyming for Stella on her birthday, Burns alluding to one of his prettiest verses as "this random clink"—could one not hear, from every glassed-in case in the great room, the whisper and beating of these troubled hearts? It was intolerable: one could not linger too long. "Oh, I *adore* Sterne," said a lady with a lorgnette, gazing into the case where the MS. of one of Laurence's sermons lay side by side with his letter to "Bramine"—"I have some time foreboded I should think of you too much; and behold it is come to pass."

"Oh, *look* at his *handwriting!*" cried the lady over the Addison case. "Isn't it *fascinating!*" Somehow it seems as though textbooks have a way of obscuring the truth that literature is just that—handwriting; that there was an actual fist behind it, and that these poor shreds of scribble were leaves from a growing tree. There was a poet who died the other day, T. W. H. Crosland, whose angry and fiery heart pushed real blood into the veins of his work. In his book on *The English Sonnet* he wrote (of Michael Drayton):

> Here we have no newling, honey-lipped, sugared "sonneteer," but a gentleman with a temper of his own and something of a fist in which to hold the quill. The notion that poetry, and sonnets in particular, are written only by the mild-mannered, and persons in precarious health, requires to be dispelled. As a fact, great poets are not only the sanest people in the world, but physically and temperamentally the toughest.

My copy of Crosland's *Collected Poems* is not handy, for a few weeks ago I found myself thinking of him, and lent it to a friend—but the concluding line of one of his sonnets comes to me with a thrill—

> And Death must dig the level where these agree.

Now he is dead: as dead as Milton; but when he was alive, he wrote fine things. He sat down and brooded on his topic, thinking how wrong everyone else was: he brooded until he bubbled with rage, and then, in a superb and delightful anger he began to write, with knitted lips, flailing about with his pen, distributing largesse of jeers and jewels. His work suffered, as the work of an angry man must; but he was real. When our correspondent can convince her pupils that literature is a human voice, expressed from actual hearts by the form and weight of life, she has accomplished as much as can be done for those young skeptics. Even then her most skilful insinuations will never startle them as much as what they find out for themselves.[1]

—Christopher Morley on "Handwriting."

[1] Reprinted from his column in the *The Saturday Review of Literature*, by special permission of the author.

ON UNANSWERING LETTERS[1]

There are a great many people who really believe in answering letters the day they are received, just as there are people who go to the movies at nine o'clock in the morning; but these people are stunted and queer.

It is a great mistake. Such crass and breathless promptness takes away a great deal of the pleasure of correspondence.

The psychological didoes involved in receiving letters and making up one's mind to answer them are very complex. If the tangled process could be clearly analyzed and its component involutions isolated for inspection, we might reach a clearer comprehension of that curious bag of tricks, the efficient Masculine Mind.

Take Bill F., for instance, a man so delightful that even to contemplate his existence puts us in good humor and makes us think well of a world that can exhibit an individual equally comely in mind, body, and estate. Every now and then we get a letter from Bill, and immediately we pass into a kind of trance, in which our mind rapidly enunciates the ideas, thoughts, surmises, and contradictions that we would like to write to him in reply. We think what fun it would be to sit right down and churn the ink-well, spreading speculation and cynicism over a number of sheets of foolscap to be wafted Billward.

Sternly we repress the impulse for we know that the shock to Bill of getting so immediate a retort would surely unhinge the well-fitted panels of his intellect.

We add his letter to the large delta of unanswered mail on our desk, taking occasion to turn the mass over once or twice and run through it in a brisk, smiling mood, thinking of all the jolly letters we shall write some day.

[1] From *Mince Pie*, pp. 35–40. Copyright 1919 by Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc.

After Bill's letter has lain on the pile for a fortnight or so it has been gently silted over by about twenty other pleasantly postponed manuscripts. Coming upon it by chance, we reflect that any specific problems raised by Bill in that manifesto will by this time have settled themselves. And his random speculations upon household management and human destiny will probably have taken a new slant by now, so that to answer his letter in its own tune will not be congruent with his present fevers. We had better bide a wee until we really have something of circumstance to impart.

We wait a week.

By this time a certain sense of shame has begun to invade the privacy of our brain. We feel that to answer that letter now would be an indelicacy. Better to pretend that we never got it. By and by Bill will write again and then we will answer promptly. We put the letter back in the middle of the heap and think what a fine chap Bill is. But he knows we love him, so it doesn't really matter whether we write or not.

Another week passes by, and no further communication from Bill. We wonder whether he does love us as much as we thought. Still—we are too proud to write and ask.

A few days later a new thought strikes us. Perhaps Bill thinks we have died and he is annoyed because he wasn't invited to the funeral. Ought we to wire him? No, because after all we are not dead, and even if he thinks we are, his subsequent relief at hearing the good news of our survival will outweigh his bitterness during the interval. One of these days we will write him a letter that will really express our heart, filled with all the grindings and gear-work of our mind, rich in affection and fallacy. But we had better let it ripen and mellow for a while. Letters, like wines, accumulate bright fumes and bubblings if kept under cork.

Presently we turn over that pile of letters again. We find in the lees of the heap two or three that have gone for six months and can safely be destroyed. Bill is still on our mind, but in a pleasant, dreamy kind of way. He does not ache or twinge us

as he did a month ago. It is fine to have old friends like that and keep in touch with them. We wonder how he is and whether he has two children or three. Splendid old Bill!

By this time we have written Bill several letters in imagination and enjoyed doing so, but the matter of sending him an actual letter has begun to pall. The thought no longer has the savor and vivid sparkle it had once. When one feels like that it is unwise to write. Letters should be spontaneous outpourings: they should never be undertaken merely from a sense of duty. We know that Bill wouldn't want to get a letter that was dictated by a feeling of obligation.

Another fortnight or so elapsing, it occurs to us that we have entirely forgotten what Bill said to us in that letter. We take it out and con it over. Delightful fellow! It is full of his own felicitous kinks of whim, though some of it sounds a little old-fashioned by now. It seems a bit stale, has lost some of its freshness and surprise. Better not answer it just yet, for Christmas will soon be here and we shall have to write then anyway. We wonder, can Bill hold out until Christmas without a letter?

We have been rereading some of those imaginary letters to Bill that have been dancing in our head. They are full of all sorts of fine stuff. If Bill ever gets them he will know how we love him. To use O. Henry's immortal joke, we have days of Damon and Knights of Pythias writing those uninked letters to Bill. A curious thought has come to us. Perhaps it would be better if we never saw Bill again. It is very difficult to talk to a man when you like him so much. It is much easier to write in the sweet fantastic strain. We are so inarticulate when face to face. If Bill comes to town we will leave word that we have gone away. Good old Bill! He will always be a precious memory.

A few days later a sudden frenzy sweeps over us, and though we have many pressing matters on hand, we mobilize pen and paper and literary shock troops and prepare to hurl several battalions at Bill. But, strangely enough, our utterance seems stilted and stiff. We have nothing to say. *My dear Bill,* we

begin, *it seems a long time since we heard from you. Why don't you write? We still love you, in spite of all your shortcomings.*

That doesn't seem very cordial. We muse over the pen and nothing comes. Bursting with affection, we are unable to say a word.

Just then the phone rings. "Hello?" we say.

"It is Bill, come to town unexpectedly."

"Good old fish!" we cry, ecstatic. "Meet you at the corner of Tenth and Chestnut in five minutes."

We tear up the unfinished letter. Bill will never know how much we love him. Perhaps it is just as well. It is very embarrassing to have your friends know how you feel about them. When we meet him we will be a little bit on our guard. It would not be well to be betrayed into any extravagance of cordiality.

And perhaps a not altogether false little story could be written about a man who never visited those most dear to him, because it panged him so to say good-bye when he had to leave.

MEREDITH NICHOLSON

Novelist, essayist

Meredith Nicholson, born at Crawfordsville, Indiana, and resident of Indianapolis ever since he was a boy, is one of the boasts of that state of which Irvin S. Cobb has said, "Intellectually she rolls her own." Although known chiefly as a novelist, he has been heard to express his preference for essay-writing. In his familiar essays he achieves that friendly, pleasing style that is characteristic of the masters of that art of writing—an apparent ease that hides a carefully written composition. In his letter, he speaks briefly of his methods and of his life-long feeling for words.

"I wish I had time to reply at length to the fascinating subject of style, but I doubt whether I could offer anything that would be very helpful. In one of my books, *The Man in the Street*, there's an essay on 'The Poor Old English Language' which might amuse you. You will note in that paper a few infelicities that I threw in on purpose. Elsewhere I have written on style, but I can't cite you to the places. I usually reply to such questions as yours that one writes very largely by instinct or—one doesn't write! I began my experiments very young and my first efforts were in verse. Versifying is an excellent preparation for prose as it gives practice in precision and brevity.

"I think I always had a feeling for words and enjoyed putting them together. I have written a vast amount but I am not what you would call a facile writer. I write and

rewrite and feed my waste-paper basket generously. Now and then I produce something quite easily, but usually I do a lot of recasting. If the book mentioned above is in your college library it might interest you to observe the varying tone of the different papers written through ten years and in various places. 'The Cheerful Breakfast Table' was written in a Chicago hotel where I happened to be marooned for a few days and I did it quite easily. But of course the material had been gathering in my mind, and the form had fixed itself. There is an inevitableness in form and phrase; you don't know how you get 'em but they come—and they just *have* to be! *Curiosa felicitas* may be attained by labor; but the mark of the tool must be obliterated. I must visualize a thing before I begin to write—'see' it in type. Sometimes I can 'see' a whole essay or a short story even to the order of paragraphs. I remember that when I was a reporter I began composing my 'story' in my head on the way back from an assignment. A writer can do a lot of work as he walks or shaves or brushes his hair.

"There is, of course, a great literature on the subject of style—interesting indeed, but to peruse it is to be filled with despair at the hopelessness of plucking the heart out of the mystery."

—Meredith Nicholson.

THE CHEERFUL BREAKFAST TABLE [1]

"A good, honest, wholesome, hungry breakfast."—*The Compleat Angler.*

"One fine morning in the full London season, Major Arthur Pendennis came over from his lodgings, according to his custom, to breakfast at a certain club in Pall Mall, of which he was a chief ornament." This has always seemed to me the noblest possible opening for a tale. The zest of a fine morning in London, the deliberation of a gentleman taking his ease in his club and fortifying himself against the day's events with a satisfying breakfast, are communicated to the reader in a manner that at once inspires confidence and arouses the liveliest expectations. I shall not go the length of saying that all novels should begin with breakfast, but where the disclosures are to be of moment, and we are to be urged upon adventures calculated to tax our emotions or our staying powers, a breakfast table serves admirably as a point of departure. We thus begin the imaginary day where the natural day begins, and we form the acquaintance of the characters at an hour when human nature is most satisfactorily and profitably studied.

It is only a superstition that night alone affords the proper atmosphere for romance, and that the curtain must fall upon the first scene with the dead face of the king's messenger upturned to the moon and the landlord bawling from an upper window to know what it's all about. Morning is the beginning of all things. Its hours breathe life and hope. "Pistols and coffee!" The phrase whets the appetite both for the encounter and the cheering cup. The duel, to be sure, is no longer in favor, and it is not for me to lament its passing; but I mention it as an affair of dewy mornings, indelibly associated with hours when the hand is steady and courage runs high.

[1] From *The Man in the Street.* Reprinted by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

It may be said with all assurance that breakfast has fallen into sad neglect, due to the haste and rush of modern life—the commuter's anxiety touching the 8:26, the city man's fear that he may not be able to absorb the day's news before his car is at the door. Breakfast has become a negligible item of the day's schedule. An increasing number of American citizens are unfit to be seen at the breakfast hour; and a man, woman, or child who cannot present a cheery countenance at breakfast is living an unhealthy life upon the brink of disaster. A hasty visit to the table, the gulping of coffee, the vicious snapping of teeth upon food scarcely looked at, and a wild rush to keep the first appointment noted on the calendar, is the poorest possible preparation for a day of honest work. The man who follows this practice is a terror to his business associates. Reports that "the boss isn't feeling well this morning" pass about the office, with a disturbance of the morale that does not make for the efficiency of the establishment. The wife who reaches the table disheveled and fretful, under compulsion of her conscience, with the idea that the lord of the house should not be permitted to fare forth without her benediction, would do better to keep her bed. If the eggs are overdone or the coffee cold and flavorless, her panicky entrance at the last moment will not save the situation. A growl from behind the screening newspaper is a poor return for her wifely self-denial, but she deserves it. There is guilt upon her soul; if she had not insisted on taking the Smiths to supper after the theater the night before, he would have got the amount of sleep essential to his well-being and the curtaining paper would not be camouflaging a face to which the good-by kiss at the front door is an affront, not a caress.

"Have the children come down yet?" the lone breakfaster growlingly demands. The maid replies indifferently that the children have severally and separately partaken of their porridge and departed. Her manner of imparting this information signifies rebellion against a system which makes necessary the repeated offering to breakfast to persons who accept only that they may complain of it. No happier is the matutinal meal in

humbler establishments where the wife prepares and serves the food, and buttons up Susie's clothes or sews a button on Johnny's jacket while the kettle boils. If the husband met a bootlegger in the alley the previous night it is the wife's disagreeable duty to rouse him from his protracted slumbers; and if, when she has produced him at the table, he is displeased with the menu, his resentment, unchecked by those restraints presupposed of a higher culture, is manifested in the playful distribution of the tableware in the general direction of wife and offspring. The family cluster fearfully at the door as the head of the house, with surly resignation, departs for the scene of his daily servitude with the smoke of his pipe trailing behind him, animated by no love for the human race but only a firm resolution not to lift his hand until the last echoes of the whistle have died away.

It is foreign to my purpose to indict a whole profession, much less the medical fraternity, which is so sadly harassed by a generation of Americans who demand in pills and serums what its progenitors found in the plough handle and the axe, and yet I cannot refrain from laying at the doors of the doctors some burden of responsibility for the destruction of the breakfast table. The astute and diplomatic physician, perfectly aware that he is dealing with an outraged stomach and that the internal discomfort is due to overindulgence, is nevertheless anxious to impose the slightest tax upon the patient's self-denial. Breakfast, he reflects, is no great shakes anyhow, and he suggests that it be curtailed, or prescribes creamless coffee or offers some other hint equally banal. This is wholly satisfactory to Jones, who says with a sigh of relief that he never cared much for breakfast, and that he can very easily do without it.

About twenty-five years ago someone started a boom for the breakfastless day as conducive to longevity. I know persons who have clung stubbornly to this absurdity. The despicable habit contributes to domestic unsociability and is, I am convinced by my own experiments, detrimental to health. The chief business of the world is transacted in the morning hours, and I am reluctant to believe that it is most successfully done on

empty stomachs. Fasting as a spiritual discipline is, of course, quite another thing; but fasting by a tired business man under medical compulsion can hardly be lifted to the plane of things spiritual. To delete breakfast from the day's program is sheer cowardice, a confession of invalidism which is well calculated to reduce the powers of resistance. The man who begins the day with a proscription that sets him apart from his neighbors may venture into the open jauntily, persuading himself that his abstinence proves his superior qualities; but in his heart, to say nothing of his stomach, he knows that he has been guilty of a sneaking evasion. If he were a normal, healthy being, he would not be skulking out of the house breakfastless. Early rising, a prompt response to the breakfast-bell, a joyous breaking of the night's fast is a rite not to be despised in civilized homes.

Old age rises early and calls for breakfast and the day's news. Grandfather is entitled to his breakfast at any hour he demands it. He is at an age when every hour stolen from the night is fairly plucked from oblivion, and to offer him breakfast in bed as more convenient to the household, or with a well-meant intention of easing the day for him, is merely to wound his feelings. There is something finely appealing in the thought of a veteran campaigner in the army of life who doesn't wait for the bugle to sound reveille, but kindles his fire and eats his ration before his young comrades are awake.

The failure of breakfast, its growing ill repute and disfavor are not, however, wholly attributable to the imperfections of our social or economic system. There is no more reason why the homes of the humble should be illumined by a happy breakfast table than that the morning scene in abodes of comfort and luxury should express cheer and a confident faith in human destiny. Snobbishness must not enter into this matter of breakfast reform; rich and poor alike must be persuaded that the morning meal is deserving of all respect, that it is the first act of the day's drama, not to be performed in a slipshod fashion to spoil the rest of the play. It is the first chapter of a story, and everyone who has dallied with the art of fiction knows that not

merely the first chapter but the first line must stir the reader's imagination.

It is a common complaint of restrospective elderly persons that the family life, as our grandparents knew it, has been destroyed by the haste and worry incident to modern conditions. Breakfast—a leisurely, jolly affair as I would have it, with every member of the household present on the stroke of the gong—is unequalled as a unifying force. The plea that everybody is in a hurry in the morning is no excuse; if there is any hour when haste is unprofitable it is that first morning hour.

A day should not be "jumped into," but approached tranquilly and with respect and enlivened by every element of joy that can be communicated to it. At noon we are in the midst of conflict; at nightfall we have won or lost battles; but in the morning "all is possible and all unknown." If we have slept like honest folk, and are not afraid of a dash of cold water, we meet the day blithely and with high expectation. If the day dawn brightly, there is good reason for sharing its promise with those who live under the same roof; if it be dark and rain beats upon the pane, even greater is the need of family communion, that every member may be strengthened for valiant wrestling with the day's tasks.

As against the tendency, so destructive of good health and mental and moral efficiency, to slight breakfast, the food manufacturers have set themselves with praiseworthy determination to preserve and dignify the meal. One has but to peruse the advertising pages of the periodicals to learn of the many tempting preparations that are offered to grace the breakfast table. The obtuse, inured to hasty snatches, nibbles, and sips, are assisted to a proper appreciation of these preparations by the most enchanting illustrations. The art of publicity has spent itself lavishly to lure the world to an orderly and contemplative breakfast with an infinite variety of cereals that have been subjected to processes which make them a boon to mankind. When I hear of an addition to the long list, I fly at once to the grocer to obtain one of the crisp packages, and hurry home to

deposit it with the cook for early experiment. The adventurous sense is roused not only by the seductive advertisement but by the neatness of the container, the ears of corn or the wheat sheaf so vividly depicted on the wrapper, or the contagious smile of a radiant child brandishing a spoon and demanding more.

Only a slouchy and unimaginative housewife will repeat monotonously a breakfast schedule. A wise rotation, a continual surprise in the food offered, does much to brighten the table. The damnable iteration of ham and eggs has cracked the pillars of many a happy home. There should be no ground for cavil; the various items should not only be well-chosen, but each dish should be fashioned as for a feast of high ceremony. Gluttony is a grievous sin; breakfast, I repeat, should be a spiritual repast. If fruit is all that the soul craves, well enough; but let it be of paradisaical perfection. If coffee and a roll satisfy the stomach's craving, let the one be clear and not so bitter as to keep the imbiber's heart protesting all day, and the other hot enough to melt butter and of ethereal lightness. The egg is the most sinned against of all foods. It would seem that no one could or would wantonly ruin an egg, a thing so useful and so inoffensive; and yet the proper cooking of an egg is one of the most difficult of all culinary arts. Millions of eggs are ruined every year in American kitchens. Better that the whole annual output should be cast into the sea than that one egg should offend the eye and the palate of the expectant breakfaster.

It grieves me to be obliged to confess that in hotels and on dining-cars, particularly west of Pittsburgh, many of my fellow citizens are weak before the temptation of hot cakes, drenched in syrup. I have visited homes where the griddle is an implement frequently invoked through the winter months, and I have at times, in my own house, met the buckwheat cake and the syrup jug and meekly fallen before their combined assault; but the sight of a man eating hot cakes on a flying train, after a night in a sleeper, fills me with a sense of desolation. Verily it is not alone the drama that the tired business man has brought to low estate!

Sausage and buckwheat cakes have never appealed to me as an inevitable combination like ham and eggs. Beefsteak and onions at the breakfast hour are only for those who expect to devote the remainder of the day to crime or wood-chopping. The scent in itself is not the incense for rosy-fingered morn; and steak at breakfast, particularly in these times of perpendicular prices, speaks for vulgar display rather than generosity.

The history of breakfast, the many forms that it has known, the customs of various tribes and nations, assist little in any attempt to re-establish the meal in public confidence. Plato may have done his loftiest thinking on an empty stomach; I incline to the belief that Sophocles was at all times a light breakfaster; Horace must regret that he passed into the Elysian Fields without knowing the refreshing qualities of a grapefruit. If my post-mortem terminal were less problematical, I should like to carry him a grapefruit—a specimen not chilled to death in cold storage—and divide it with him, perhaps adding a splash of Falernian for memory's sake. But the habits of the good and great of olden times are not of the slightest importance to us of twentieth-century America. Still, not to ignore wholly the familiar literary associations suggested by my subject, Samuel Rogers and his weakness for entertaining at breakfast, shall have honorable mention. Rogers' breakfasts, one of his contemporaries hinted, were a cunning test of the fitness of the guests to be promoted to the host's dinner table—a process I should have reversed, on the theory that the qualifications for breakfast guests are far more exacting than those for a dinner company. We have testimony that Rogers' breakfasts, informal and with everyone at ease, were much more successful than his dinners. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron and Moore, Southey and Macaulay, the Duke of Wellington, and Lord John Russell were fellows to make a lively breakfast table. At one of these functions Coleridge talked for three hours on poetry, an occasion on which, we may assume, the variety or quality of the food didn't matter greatly.

Breakfast as a social medium has never flourished in America,

chiefly because of our lack of leisure. Where recognized at all it is thrown into the middle of the day where it becomes an anomaly, an impudent intrusion. A breakfast that is a luncheon is not a breakfast, but a concession to the Philistines. Once, with considerable difficulty, I persuaded a lady of my acquaintance to undertake to popularize breakfast by asking a company, few and fit, for eight o'clock. The first party was delightful, and the second, moved along to nine, was equally successful. But the hostess was so pleased with her success that she increased the number of guests to a dozen and then to fifteen, and advanced the hour to noon, with the result that the felicity of the earlier hours was lost. One must have a concrete program to be of service in these reforms, and I shall say quite fearlessly that a round table set for six is the ideal arrangement.

A breakfast must be planned with greatest care. It should never be resorted to as a means of paying social debts, but arranged with the utmost independence. Where a wife is a desirable guest and the husband is not, there is no reason why a plate should be wasted. On the other hand, I should as rigidly exclude the wife who is socially a non-conductor. The talk at a breakfast table must be spirited, and it will not be otherwise if the company is well chosen. It's an absurd idea that candlelight is essential to sociability and that wit will not sparkle in the early morning. Some of the best talk I ever listened to has been at breakfast tables, where the guests conversed freely under the inspiration of a mounting sun. Doctor Holmes clearly believed the breakfast hour appropriate for the disclosure of the sprightliest philosophy.

An American novelist once explained that he did his writing in the afternoon because he couldn't make love in the morning. Not make love in the morning! The thought is barbarous. Morning is of sentiment all compact. Morning to the lover who possesses a soul is washed with Olympian dews. The world is all before him where to choose and his heart is his only guide. Love is not love that fears the morning light. . . . There was a house by the sea, whence a girl used to dart forth every morning

for a run over the rocks. We used to watch her from our windows, admiring the lightness of her step, her unconscious grace as she was silhouetted on some high point of the shore against the blue of the sea and sky. It was to think of him, her lover, in the free sanctuary of the new, clean day that she ran that morning with her own spirits. And he, perhaps knowing that she was thus preparing herself for their first meeting, would fly after her, and they would come running back, hand in hand, and appear with glowing cheeks and shining eyes at the breakfast table, to communicate to the rest of us the joy of youth.

There are houses in which participation in the family breakfast is frankly denied to the guest, who is informed that by pressing a button in his room coffee will appear at any hour that pleases his fancy. Let us consider this a little. The ideal guest is rare; the number of persons one really enjoys having about, free to penetrate the domestic arcana, is small indeed. This I say who am not an inhospitable soul. That a master and mistress should keep the morning free is, however, no sign of unfriendliness; the shoving of breakfast into a room does not argue necessarily for churlishness, and I have never so interpreted it. A hostess has her own affairs to look after, and the despatch of trays upstairs enables her to guard her morning from invasion. Still, in a country house, a guest is entitled to a fair shot at the morning. The day is happier when the household assembles at a fixed hour not to be trifled with by a lazy and inconsiderate guest.

Moreover, we are entitled to know what our fellows look like in the morning hours. I have spoken of lovers, and there is no sterner test of the affections than a breakfast-table inspection. Is a yawn unbecoming? We have a right to know with what manner of yawn we are to spend our lives. Is it painful to listen to the crunching of toast in the mouth of the adored? Is the wit laggard in the morning hours when it should be at its nimblest? These are grave matters not lightly to be brushed aside. At breakfast the blemish in the damask cheek publishes itself shámelessly; an evil temper that is subdued by candle-

light will betray itself over the morning coffee. At breakfast we are what we are, and not what we may make ourselves for good or ill before the stars twinkle.

I protest against breakfast in bed as not only unsocial but unbecoming in the children of democracy. I have never succumbed to this temptation without experiencing a feeling of humiliation and cowardice. A proper punishment for such self-indulgence is inflicted by the stray crumbs that lodge between the sheets unless one be highly skilled in the handling of breakfast trays. Crumbs in bed! Procrustes missed a chance here. The presence of emptied dishes in a bedroom is disheartening in itself; the sight of them brings to a sensitive soul a conviction of incompetence and defeat. You cannot evade their significance; they are the wreck of a battle lost before you have buckled on your armor or fired an arrow at the foe. My experiments have been chiefly in hotels, where I have shrunk from appearing in a vast hall built for banqueting and wholly unsuitable for breakfasting; but better suffer this gloomy isolating experience than huddle between covers and balance a tray on stubborn knees that rebel at the indignity.

The club breakfast is an infamous device designed to relieve the mind of what should be the pleasant privilege of selection. I am uninformed as to who invented this iniquity of numbered alternatives, but I unhesitatingly pronounce him an enemy of mankind. Already too many forces are operating to beat down the imagination. I charge this monstrosity upon the propagandists of realism; certainly no romanticist in the full possession of his powers would tolerate a thing so deadly to the play of fancy. I want neither the No. 7 nor the No. 9 prescribed on the card; and the waiter's index finger wabbling down the margin in an attempt to assist me is an affront, an impudence. Breakfast should be an affair between man and his own soul; a business for the initiative, not the referendum.

Breakfast out of doors is the ideal arrangement, or in winter under an ample screen of glass. My own taste is for a perspective of sea or lake; but a lusty young river at the elbow is not to be

despised. The camper, of course, has always the best of it; a breakfast of fresh-caught trout with an Indian for company serves to quicken such vestiges of the primitive as remain in us. But we do not, if we are wise, wait for ideal conditions. It is a part of the great game of life to make the best of what we have, particularly in a day that finds the world spinning madly "down the ringing grooves of change."

The breakfast table must be made a safe place for humanity, an inspirational center of democracy. A land whose people drowsily turn over for another nap at eight o'clock, or languidly ring for coffee at eleven, is doomed to destruction. Of such laziness is unpreparedness born—the vanguard of the enemy already howling at the postern; treason rampant in the citadel; wailing in the court. Breakfast, a sensible meal at a seasonable hour; sausage or beefsteak if you are capable of such atrocities; or only a juicy orange if your appetite be dainty; but breakfast, a cheerful breakfast with family or friends, no matter how great the day's pressure. This, partaken of in a mood of kindliness and tolerance toward all the world, is a definite accomplishment. By so much we are victors, and whether the gulfs wash us down or we sight the happy isles, we have set sail with flags flying and to the stirring roll of drums.

CHARLES HANSON TOWNE

Editor, author

Mr. Towne has had his writing and editorial experiences in New York. He has been a constant contributor of verse to the magazines and he has held a number of editorial positions. At present he is editor of *Harper's Bazaar*. He has had to deal, then, not only with his own writing but with the writing of others. In some respects a disciple of "modernity" (see, for instance, his poem "Manhattan"), he condemns its careless tendencies.

"Your letter is stimulating. I wish that I could talk to your students. It is hard to convey, in a letter, how one feels on the subject of the preservation of all that is best in the English language. I deplore the so-called "colyumnists" and other clever charlatans who are so forming the taste—or lack of taste—of the American youth of today. Let us get back to solid foundations. Let us read—and memorize—our Shakespeare, our Shelley, our Browning, and—best of all—our Keats. Who was it that said that to the ignorant, history begins with them? There is no glorious past to those who, satisfied, walk in the sunlight of today. The Greeks paved the way for our culture; who reads or studies them now? Yet there they are, like a vast honeycomb of beauty, aching to give us of their sweetness.

"But do not think, when I say this, that I deplore my own time. I have ever been a fighter for modernity. Hence my 'Manhattan,' a poem of the city as I see it, and ever see it—a great and wonderful thing.

"The writers of this hour whom I most admire are: George Moore, James Stephens, Yeats, Masefield, Masters, Frost, Sara Teasdale, Edna Millay, some of Theodosia Garrison, and some of Amy Lowell. I also admire Galsworthy, Bennett, Wells, Maugham, Swinnerton, Walpole; and certainly Tarkington, Alice Brown, Zona Gale, Willa Cather, and parts of Hergesheimer, and much of Le Gallienne. We must cling to beauty and truth—which, as Keats said, are one.

"I wish that your classes could realize that great literature is not made in a moment. So many young writers come to me, avid only of what they call success—an empty thing, after all. They will not take the pains to *work;* they wish to rush into print. Getting into print does not mean success. Often, alas! it means immediate failure. Tell them to read only the best, and to avoid, as they would a plague, the smart-alecks who live but a day in the newspapers."

—Charles Hanson Towne.

OUR PASSION FOR HASTE [1]

There is a shorthand appearing among the American "go-getters" which sends a shudder down the spine of anyone who cares for the right word rightly used. The fundamental decencies and niceties of our language are utterly ignored by a new riff-raff who have taken complete possession of the publicity field; and just as when Latin went out of certain college curriculums a fresh evidence of carelessness and rush appeared in our national consciousness, so an added menace is seen in electric signs which announce that "vodvil" is given twice daily at this or that theater. We are confronted, not with the old and reliable word "restaurant," but with a hideous counterpart of it—"eats." Into the rubbish heap has gone the picturesque "frankfurters," and in its place has come—"franks." Real-estate dealers are no longer content to be just that; they must be known as "realtors." And conversely, with a sort of roguish superiority the good old undertakers, in California particularly, prefer nowadays to call themselves grandiloquently "morticians." A motor trip through the countryside, with advertisements of "hot dogs," will reveal from day to day—yes, even from hour to hour—scandalous abbreviations or flowery perversions of words which make it almost necessary for the average American to learn a new language. Our column conductors are partly responsible for this. "Colyum" is no doubt now in the dictionary, though I have not had the courage to look and see. We have acquired a new "slanguage," someone will brightly tell us; and alas! it is only too true.

Note, too, the careless punctuation in many a book which purports to come from the presses of old established houses.

[1] Reprinted from *Harper's Magazine*, November 1924, pp. 798–800, by permission of the author and publishers.

The semicolon is almost forgotten among modern proofreaders. As for the colon, few writers, even of eminence, know where to place it. "I can always hire a college professor to go over my proofs," a well-known author told me recently in utter seriousness. "Besides, I never did know much about punctuation and paragraphing." Yet punctuation is as much a part of good writing as the words themselves.

No one reads aloud any more. We have become a nation of listeners-in, with no time for thought and contemplation, and less for sound study. We want results—swift, sure results, no matter how we may gain them. We slip through life, or go furtively around it, in our desire to arrive—nowhere. We are not concerned with manners, despite our numerous etiquette books, and not at all with the aristocratic preservation of the best of the classics. Our national motto, in a single word, might be "Blah!"; or, in four words, "Let George Do It." We smile at the mention of standards, for these are old-fashioned; we use "don't" for "doesn't," even when we pretend to be educated; and not one college graduate out of a hundred, I venture to say, could use correctly the word "only." We count it a salutary thing that our colloquialisms are becoming a part of our written literature. We have books written "in American"—whatever that may be—by little upstarts who probably have no knowledge of the great English essayists; those men and women who cared ardently for the safeguarding of words, and who marshaled them as a general might marshal his troops, in orderly array.

Recently I read a "blurb" in a so-called popular magazine, in which someone who made no claim to a dignified reputation, but who doubtless had millions in the bank, stated that at last he had discovered why he was bored by the writing of Anatole France. It was because he had learned that this great master actually rewrites his sentences, often thirty times, before he ventures to send his manuscript to press. And the editor backed up this ingenuous criticism by stating that "material for this magazine is accepted, not for the manner, but the matter"—or words to that effect.

It is of little moment, it would seem, in these rushing days, how a thought is expressed. Yet listen to the Irish stylist, James Stephens. I quote this paragraph, which is a prose-poem, from *The Crock of Gold*, which no doubt our self-appointed critic has never read:

> A thought is a real thing and words are only its raiment, but a thought is as shy as a virgin; unless it is fittingly apparelled we may not look on its shadowy nakedness; it will fly from us and only return again in the darkness crying in a thin, childish voice which we may not comprehend until, with aching minds, listening and divining, we at last fashion for it those symbols which are its protection and its banner.

How long did it take Stephens to write that beautiful sentence? He may have dashed it off, yet I doubt it. It reveals the painstaking artist, struggling for mastery over his craft, yet hiding the struggle, as all artistic endeavor should be hidden. It is only the final result which matters; how a perfect passage is accomplished is of no concern to the reader. That is the artist's business; and to dislike an author because one chances to discover his method is a state of mind which has no place in the company of true criticism. Yeats has told us that the act of composition has always been painful to him—as the act of physical reproduction is painful to a mother. He can never write more than seven or eight lines a day. Are we to despise his seemingly spontaneous ballads and songs because of a knowledge of the way in which he works?

The truth is that any bit of art is seldom achieved in haste. "Easy writing makes hard reading" is an old, proved truth. There is no short cut to artistic fame. Even silver-tongued orators write and rewrite and then memorize their speeches. There can be no capture of perfection and beauty—except in moments of high inspiration—through processes of speed. Wordsworth has said that "Poetry is emotion remembered in tranquillity." The base purveyors of penny-dreadful fiction may have their little hour—and their big bank accounts; but they will have no place at all in the memories of future generations.

SIMEON STRUNSKY

Essayist, critic, editorial writer

Born in Russia, educated in New York, Mr. Strunsky is now a distinguished editorial writer. He is one of that group of brilliant New York journalists among whom are Franklin P. Adams ("F.P.A."), Christopher Morley, Don Marquis, Heywood Broun, and others.

"Your letter poses two questions of which the second is much harder to answer. If your students in rhetoric argue that there is no use in studying composition since they can always manage to make themselves understood, no matter how they express themselves, the answer might very well come in the form of my friend F.P.A.'s classic phrase, 'Is *that* so?' What makes them so sure that they will be understood? What makes them think that a world which is always more and more in a hurry will stop to dig down into their obscurities and stutterings for their precious message? Those of your students who plan to go into business must know even now that their future customers will not understand their sales talks 'no matter how they express themselves.' Whatever your young folks expect to do in the post-academic hereafter, whether they expect to sell goods, or ideas, or services, or dreams, they must present their wares always with clearness and vigor, and if they want unusual success, then also with beauty and charm.

" . . . I don't know if the instructors in rhetoric still emphasize one point that used to be greatly stressed in my own undergraduate days; and that was that the surest way to say something well was to have something to say. The young ones immediately proceed to take advantage. They argue, 'Exactly; when we have something to say we shall be able to say it without learning how; at present we feel we have no pressing message to deliver, so there is no use trying.' In other words, by inculcating the idea that when the spirit is moved the gift of tongues will automatically descend on the class, the teacher sometimes encourages that very habit of sitting around and waiting for 'inspiration.'

" . . . I don't see why your students, the ungrateful wretches, should kick against the textbooks of today. In my schooldays we were just emerging from the Lindley Murray and Genung method of studying the use of the English language by studying rules and classifications. To be sure it was my own good fortune at college to get aboard the newer method of a minimum of rules and a maximum of love and practice. The late George Rice Carpenter made us write daily themes and he read to us and made us read things that warmed and enflamed us. Then it was a novelty, but today I understand it is the established method. And it is the only method. To read, to catch the flame either automatically or from the instructor, to begin to play the sedulous ape, to go intoxicated over words, no matter whose—Thackeray's, Stevenson's, Kipling's, Conrad's, Stuart Sherman's, H. L. Mencken's—But isn't that what you are doing? Where do all the *Atlantic Classics* go to if not to the colleges? My friend Christopher Morley edits a volume of Modern Essays and they sell fifty thousand copies. Somebody in

the colleges must be reading them and getting him or herself exposed to the disease.

"One thing to combat is that damnable 'inspiration' theory! If you can get your students to love words as words they won't sit around waiting to be inspired. They'll prattle; and once you get them to do that you have them. Inflation, verbosity, redundancy, pretension, in other words youth and intoxication, they can all be easily dealt with. And I should deal easily with them! Time and Teacher will tame the wild ones, if only they will go wild and write. And for that purpose there is nothing better than to throw them together with other people who have gone wild with the joy of words, from the Bible to Sinclair Lewis who uses a great many.

"For a specimen of my own writing, may I refer you to a short chapter which may be perhaps relevant to the whole subject of your letter? . . . a little essay of mine entitled 'Rhetoric 21.' I think it is fairly well written. At any rate it is characteristic."

—Simeon Strunsky.

A FLEDGLING [1]

A sophomore's soul is not the simple thing that most people imagine. I am thinking now of my nephew Philip and of our last meeting. This time, he was more than usually welcome. I was lonely. The family had just left town for the summer and the house was fearfully empty. I sat there, smoking a cigarette amid the first traces of domestic uncleanliness, when I heard him on the stairs. The dear boy had not changed. Dropping his heavy suitcase anyways, he seized my hand within his own huge paw and squeezed it till the tears came to my eyes. His voice was a young roar. He threw his hat upon the table, thereby scattering a large number of papers about the room, and then sat down upon my own hat, which was lying on the armchair, on top of several July magazines. I had put my hat down on the chair instead of hanging it up, as I should have done, because the family was away and I was alone in the house.

Might he smoke? He was busy with his bull-dog pipe and my tobacco jar before I could say yes. He explained that he was sorry, but he found he could neither read, write, nor think nowadays without his pipe. He admitted that he was the slave of a noxious habit, but it was too late, and he might as well get all the solace he could out of a pretty bad situation. But, as I look at Philip, I cannot help feeling that his fine colour and the sparkle in his blue eyes and his full count of nineteen years make the situation far less desperate than he portrays it. Philip is not a handsome lad, but he will be a year from now. At present he is mostly hands and feet, and his face shows a marked nasal development. Before Philip has completed his junior year, the rest of his features will have reasserted themselves, and the harmony of lineament which was his when he

[1] From *The Patient Observer*. Copyright 1911 by Dodd, Mead and Company.

was an infant, as his mother never tires of regretfully recalling, will be restored. Until that time Philip must be content to carry the suggestion of an attractive and eager young bird of prey.

Philip lights pipe after pipe as he dilates on his experiences since last I saw him. The moralising instinct is very weak in me. I cannot find it in my heart to censure Philip's constant mouthing of the pipe. I, too, smoke, and I am not foolish enough to risk my standing with Philip by preaching where I do not practise. Besides, I observe that the boy does not inhale, that his pipe goes out frequently, and that his consumption of matches is much greater than his consumption of tobacco. So I say nothing in reproof of his pipe.

But it is different with his language. Philip, I observe regretfully, is profane. I am not mealy-mouthed myself. There are moments of high emotional tension when silence is the worst form of blasphemy. But Philip is profane without discrimination. His supply of unobjectionable adjectives would be insufficient to meet the needs of the ordinary kindergarten conversation. He uses the same swift epithet to describe certain brands of tobacco, the weather on commencement day, the food at his eating-house, his professors of French and of mathematics, the spirit of the incoming freshman class, and the outlook for "snap" courses during the coming year.

It is not my moral but my æsthetic sense that takes offence, so I ask Philip whether it is the intensity of his feelings that makes it impossible for him to discuss his work or his play without continual reference to the process of perdition and the realm of lost souls; or whether it is habit. No sooner have I put my question than I am sorry. There is nothing the young soul is so afraid of as of satire. It can understand being petted and it can understand being whipped; but the sting behind the smile, the lash beneath the caress, throws the young soul into helpless panic. It feels itself baited and knows not whither it may flee. I have always thought that the worst type of bully is the teacher in school or in college who indulges a pretty tal-

ent for satire at the expense of his pupils. It is a cowardly and a demoralising practice. It means not only hitting some one who is powerless to retort, it means confusing the sense of truth in the adolescent mind. Here is some one quite grown up who smiles and means to hurt you, who says good and means bad, who says yes and means no. The young soul stares at you and sees the standards of the universe in chaos about itself.

And I feel all the more guilty in Philip's case because I know that the lad speaks only a mechanical lingo which goes with his bull-dog pipe and the aggressive shade of his neckwear and his socks. The very pain and alarm my question raises in him shows well enough that his soul has kept young and clear amid his world of "muckers" and "grinds" and "cads" and "rotten sneaks," and all the men and things and conditions he is in the habit of depicting in various stages of damnation. "Now, you're making fun of me," says Philip. "We fellows don't know how to pick out words that sound nice, but mean a—I beg your pardon—a good deal more than they say. Anyhow, I suppose, if I try from now on till doomsday I shall never be able to speak like you."

Bless his young sophomore's soul! With that last sentence Philip has seized me hip and thigh and hurled me into an emotional whirlpool, where chills and thrills rapidly succeed each other. Because I am fifteen years older than Philip the boy invests me with a halo and bathes me in adoration. I am fifteen years older than he, I am bald, obscure, and far from prosperous, and there is unmistakably nothing about me to dazzle the youthful imagination. Yet the facts are as I have stated them. Philip likes to be with me, copies me without apparently trying to, and has chosen my profession—so he has often told me—for his own. I am pretty sure that he has made up his mind when he is as old as I am to smoke the same brand of rather mediocre tobacco which I have adopted for practical reasons. I am sometimes tempted to think that Philip, at my age, intends to be as bald as I am.

Hence the alternate thrills and chills. I am by nature restless

under worship. The sense of my own inconsequence grows positively painful in the face of Philip's outspoken veneration. There are people to whom such tribute is as incense and honey. But I am not one of them. I have tried to be and have failed. I have argued with myself that, after all, it is the outsider who is the best judge; that we are most often severest upon ourselves; that if Philip finds certain high qualities in me, perhaps there is in me something exceptional. I even go so far as to draw up a little catalogue of my acts and achievements. I can recall men who have said much sillier things than I have ever said, and published much worse stuff than I have ever written. I repeat to myself the rather striking epigram I made at Smith's house last week, and I go back to the old gentleman from Andover who two years ago told me that there was something about me that reminded him of Oliver Wendell Holmes. By dint of much trying I work myself up into something of a glow; but it is all artificial, cerebral, incubated. The exaltation is momentary, the cold chill of fact overtakes me. There is no use in deceiving one's self. Philip is mistaken. I am not worthy.

But that day Philip rallied nobly to the situation. My little remark on strong language had hurt him, but he saw also that I was sorry to have hurt him, and he was sorry for me in turn. "I don't in the least mind your telling me what you think about the way we fellows talk," he said. "That's the advantage of having a man for one's friend, he is not afraid of telling you the truth even if it hurts. And then, if you wish to, you can fight back. You can't do that with a woman."

"Have you found that out for yourself!" I asked him.

He looked at me to see if again I was resorting to irony. But this time he found me sincere.

"Women!" Philip sniffed. "I have found it doesn't pay to talk seriously to a woman. There is really only one way of getting on with them, and that's jollying them. And the thicker you lay it on, the better." He put away his pipe and proffered me a cigarette. "I like to change off now and then. I have these made for me in a little Russian shop I discovered some

time ago. They draw better than any cigarette I have ever smoked. Of course, there are women who are serious and all that. There are a lot in the postgraduate department and some in the optional literature courses. But you ought to see them! And such grinds. None of us fellows stands a ghost of a chance with them. They take notes all the time and read all the references and learn them by heart. You can't jolly *them*. They wouldn't know a joke if you led them up to one and told them what it meant. I think coeducation is all played out, don't you? Home is the only place for women, anyhow. Do you like your cigarette?"

The Patient Observer, it may possibly have been gathered before this, is somewhat of a sentimentalist. He liked his cigarette very well, but through the blue haze he looked at Philip and could not help thinking of the time—only two short years ago—when he, the Patient Observer, with his own eyes saw Philip borrow a dollar from his mother before setting out for an ice-cream parlour in the company of two girl cousins. The Patient Observer has changed little in the last two years; his hair may be a little thinner and his knowledge of doctors' bills a little more complete. But in Philip of to-day he found it hard to recognise the Philip of two years ago. And the marvels of the law of growth which he thus saw exemplified moved the Patient Observer to throw open the gates of pent-up eloquence. He lit his pipe and began to discourse to Philip on the world, on life, and on a few things besides.

And when it was time for both of us to go to bed, Philip stood up and said, "I wish I came every day. You don't know what a bore it is, listening to that drool the 'profs' hand you out up there." His fervent young spirit would not be silent until, with one magnificent gesture, he had swept the tobacco jar to the floor and shattered two electric lamps. Then he went to his room and left me wondering at the vast mysteries that underlie the rough surface of the sophomore's soul.

E. V. LUCAS

Essayist, novelist, poet, critic

Mr. Lucas, editor of *Punch*, publisher of others' books, and author in his own right of familiar essays, criticisms of art and letters, novels, biography, and poetry, is not to be classified as more eminent in one field of writing than another. Here we choose to represent him as the familiar essayist. As such he has been said to possess the gentleness of Lamb, whose life he has so admirably portrayed, and the high and finished art of Stevenson. Like Stevenson, he has some very definite ideas to give the young writer of how to attain certain high qualities of style.

Mr. Lucas has written several books of travel, for he is a student of people and customs. These are as interesting reading as novels. The few quotations here do not do the book *A Wanderer in Holland* justice. For one thing, they do not reveal Mr. Lucas, the student of art, which the book itself shows. But it is hoped that these few extracts will whet the appetite of the reader for more.

"No one, by precept, can provide a writer with material to write about—that must come from within—but having the material, and the desire to put it into words, a few suggestions may be made towards clarity and brevity.

"I believe that a high road to conciseness in prose is the composition of 8-syllable couplets in verse—the sense to conclude with each couplet. For the enlargement of the vocabulary and encouragement to seek the exact word,

nothing is so good as translation from the French, particularly from an author who was peculiarly responsible for his epithets, such as, say, De Maupassant. It is probable, however, that the best writers have done neither of these things."

—E. V. Lucas.

TELEPHONICS [1]

After fighting against bondage for years I am now a slave: I have a telephone.

Although the advantages are many, it means that I have lost the purest and rarest of life's pleasures—which was to ring up from a three-pence-in-the-slot call-office (as I continually had to do) and not be asked for the money. This, in many years, has happened to me twice; and only last week I met a very rich man who is normally of a gloomy cast, across whose features played a smile brilliant with triumph, for it also had just happened to him.

On the other hand, through having a telephone of my own I now escape one of the commonest and most tiresome of life's irritations—which is to wait outside one of these call-offices while the person inside is carrying on a conversation that is not only unnecessary and frivolous, but unending. In London these offices are used both by men and women; but in the suburbs by women only, who may be thought to be romantically engaged but really are reminding their husbands not to forget the fish. The possession of a telephone of one's own, however, does not, in an imperfect world, put an end to the ordeal of waiting. If ever a fairy godmother appeared to me (but after all these years of postponement I can hardly hope for her) with the usual offer of a granted wish, I should think long before I hit upon anything better to ask for than the restoration of all the time I had spent with my own telephone at my ear waiting to be answered. The ordinary delays can be long enough, but for true foretastes of eternity you must sit at the instrument while some one is being fetched from a distant part of the building. This is a foretaste not only of eternity but of perdition, for

[1] Reprinted from *Adventures and Enthusiasms*, by permission of the author.

there is nothing to do; and to have nothing to do is to be damned. If you had a book by you, you could not read it, for your thoughts are not free to wander; all that you are mentally capable of is to speculate on the progress of the messenger to the person who is wanted, upstairs or down, the present occupation of the person who is wanted, and the probable stages of his journey to the receiver. In this employment, minutes, hours, days, weeks even, seem to drag their reluctant length along.

You can imagine also the attitude of the person who is sent for. For the telephone, common as it now is, is still associated with ceremonial. At any rate, I notice that men called to it by page boys in restaurants and hotels have a special gait of importance proper to the occasion.

The possession of a telephone no doubt now and then simplifies life; but its complications are too many, even if you adopt the sound rule to be more rung against than ringing. One of them is the perplexity incident to delays and misunderstandings, and, above all, as to the constitution of Exchanges. We all, I suppose, have our own idea as to what they are like; there must at one time or other have been photographs in the more informing of the magazines; but I missed them, and, therefore, decline on a vague vision of machinery and wire-eared ladies. A friend is more definite: "A large building," he describes it, "like Olympia, the roof lost in darkness, and pallid women moving about, spinning tops and blowing penny trumpets." To me, as I have suggested, there is more of Tartarus than Olympus about it. A sufficient hell, indeed, for any misspent life, to be continually calling up numbers, and continually being met with the saddest words that are known to men: "Number engaged."

I want to understand the whole telephone system. I want to know how the operators all get to speak exactly alike. Women can be very imitative, I am aware: the chorus girl's transition from Brixton to the Savoy restaurant can be as natural as the passage of dusk to dawn, and a change of accent is usually a part of it; but it is astonishing how the operators of the different Exchanges resemble each other. They cannot all be one and the

same. Miraculous as is everything connected with the telephone—talking quietly over wires that thread the earth beneath the busiest and noisiest of pavements in the world is sufficiently magical—it would be a shade too marvellous for one operator to be everywhere at once. Therefore, there must be many. Is there, then, a school of elocution where instruction in the most refined form of speech ever known is imparted, together with lessons in the trilling of the letter R? Why should they all say "No replay," when they mean "No reply?" And how do they talk at home? It must be terrible for their relations if they don't come down a peg or two there. The joy with which we recognise a male voice at the Exchange is another proof that woman does not really represent the gentler sex.

But these are by no means all the mysteries as to which I crave enlightenment. I want to know how the odd and alarming noises are made. There is a tapping, as of a woodpecker with delirium tremens, which at once stuns and electrifies the ear. How do they do that, and do they know what its effect is? And why does one sometimes hear other conversations over other wires, and sometimes not? Rarely are they interesting; but now and then. . . . My pen falters as I record the humiliating want of perspicacity—the tragic inability to recognise a tip—which befell me on the morning of June 4th, 1919—in other words, on Derby Day: the day when the art or science of vaticination experienced in England its darkest hour, for every prophet selected The Panther. To my annoyance I had to listen to a long conversation between what seemed to be a bookmaker and his client with regard to money to be placed on Grand Parade. This at the time only irritated me, but afterwards, when Grand Parade had won at 33 to 1, and I recognised the interruption as an effort of the gods on my behalf (had I but ears to hear), how against my folly did I rail!

Telephony, it is clear, both from one's own experience and from reading the letters in the papers, is not yet an exact science. Not, that is, in real life; although on the stage and in American detective novels it seems to be perfect. The actor lifts the re-

ceiver, mentions the number, and begins instantly to talk. If he is on the film his lips move like burning rubber and his mouth becomes a shifting cavern. Do the rank and file of us, I wonder, when telephoning, thus grimace? I must fix up a mirror and see.

There are many good telephone stories. The best that I know is told of a journalist with a somewhat hypertrophied bump of reverence for worldly success, whose employer is a peer. We will call the employer Lord Forthestait and the journalist Mr. Blank. A number of the staff were talking together, in one of the rooms of the newspaper, when the telephone rang.

"You're wanted at the phone, Mr. Blank," said the clerk.

Blank, who was just going out to lunch, came back impatiently and snatched at the instrument.

"Yes, what is it?" he snapped out.

"Is that Blank?" came back the reply. "Lord Forthestait speaking."

"Yes, my lord," said Blank, with the meekest deference, removing his hat.

GLIMPSES OF HOLLAND [1]

Alkmaar

If the weather is fine one should certainly go to Alkmaar by canal. The journey by water, on a steamer, is always interesting and intensely invigorating. It is only one remove from the open sea, so flat is the country, so free the air.

Alkmaar's magnet is its cheese market, which draws little companies of travellers thither every Friday in the season. To see it rightly one must reach Alkmaar on the preceding afternoon, to watch the arrival of the boats from the neighboring

[1] From *A Wanderer in Holland*. Reprinted by permission of The Macmillan Company.

farms, and see them unload their yellow freight on the market quay. The men who catch the cheeses are exceedingly adroit—it is the nearest thing to an English game that is played in Holland. Before they are finally placed in position the cheeses are liberally greased, until they glow and glitter like orange fires. All the afternoon the boats come in, with their collections from the various dairies on the water. By road also come cheeses in wagons of light polished wood painted blue within; and all the while the carillon of the beautiful grave Weigh House is ringing out its little tunes—the wedding march from "Lohengrin" among them—and the little mechanical horsemen are charging in the tourney to the blast of the little mechanical trumpeter. At one o'clock they run only a single course; but at noon the glories of Ashby-de-la-Zouche are enacted.

By nine o'clock on the Friday morning the market square is covered with rectangular yellow heaps arranged with Dutch systematic order and symmetry, many of them protected by tarpaulins, and the square is filled also with phlegmatic sellers and buyers, smoking, smoking, unceasingly smoking, and discussing the weather and the cheese, the cheese and the Government.

Not till ten may business begin. Instantly the first stroke of ten sounds the aspect of the place is changed. The Government and the weather recede; cheese emerges triumphant. Tarpaulins are stripped off; a new expression settles upon the features both of buyers and sellers; the dealers begin to move swiftly from one heap to another. They feel the cheeses, pat them, listen to them, plunge in their scoops and remove a long pink stick which they roll in their fingers, smell or taste and then neatly replace. Meanwhile, the seller stands by with an air part self-satisfaction, part contempt, part pity, part detachment, as who should say "It matters nothing to me whether this fussy fellow thinks the cheese good or not, buys it or not; but whether he thinks it good or bad, or whether he buys, or leaves it, it is still the best cheese in Alkmaar market, and someone will give me my price."

The seller gnaws his cigar, the buyer asks him what he asks. The buyer makes an offer. The seller refuses. The buyer increases it. The seller either refuses or accepts. In accepting, or drawing near acceptance, he extends his hand, which the buyer strikes once, and then pausing, strikes again. Apparently two such movements clench the bargain; but I must confess to being a bad guide here, for I could find no absolute rule to follow. The whole process of Alkmaar chaffering is exceedingly perplexing and elusive. Otherwise the buyer walks away to other cheeses, the seller by no means unconscious of his movements. A little later he returns, and then as likely as not his terms are accepted, unless another has been beforehand with him and bought the lot.

Not until half-past ten strikes may the weighing begin. At that hour the many porters suddenly spring into activity and hasten to the Weigh House with their loads, which are ticketed off by the master of the scales.

The scene is altogether very Dutch and very interesting; and one should make a point of crossing the canal to get a general view of the market, with the river craft in the foreground, the bustling dealers behind, and above all the elaborate tower and façade of the Weigh House.

Scheveningen

Scheveningen is half squalid town, half monstrous pleasure resort. Upon its sea ramparts are a series of gigantic buildings, greatest of which is the Curhaus, where the best music in Holland is to be heard. Its pier and its promenade are not at the first glimpse unlike Brighton's; but the vast buildings have no counterpart with us, except perhaps at Blackpool. What is, however, peculiar to Scheveningen is its expanse of sand covered with sentry-box wicker chairs. To stand on the pier on a fine day in the season and look down on these thousands of chairs and people is to receive an impression of insect-like activity that I think cannot be equalled. Immovable as they are,

the chairs seem to add to the restlessness of the seething mass. What a visitor from Mars would make of it is a mystery; but he could hardly fail to connect chair and occupant. Here, he would say, is surely the abode of giant snails!

On a windy day the chairs must be of great use; but in heat they seem to me too vertical and too hard. One must, however, either sit in them or lie upon sand. There is not a pebble on the whole coast: indeed there is not a pebble in Holland. Life after lying upon sand can become to some of us a burden almost too difficult to bear; but the Dutch holiday-maker does not seem to find it so. As for the children, they are truly in Paradise. There can be no sand better to dig in than that of Scheveningen; and they dig in it all day. A favorite game seems to be to surround the parental sentry-boxes with a fosse. Every family has its castle, and every castle its moat.

I have been twice to Scheveningen, and on each occasion I acquired beneath its glittering magnitude a sense of depression. That leaven of tenderness which every collection of human beings must have was harder to find at Scheveningen than anywhere in Holland—everything was so ordered, so organized, for pleasure, pleasure at any price, pleasure almost at the point of the bayonet.

But on the second occasion one little incident saved the day—an encounter with a strolling bird-fancier who dealt in black-headed mannikins. Two of these tiny brisk birds, in their Quaker black and brown, sat upon his cane to attract purchasers. They fluttered to his finger, perched on his hat, simulated death in the palm of his hand, and went through other evolutions with the speed of thought and the bright spontaneous alacrity possible only to a small loyal bird. These, however, were not for sale: these were decoys; the saleable birds lay, packed far too close, in little wooden boxes in a man's bag. And Scheveningen to me means no longer a mile of palaces, no longer a "hot huddle of humanity" on the sand among myriad sentry-boxes: its symbol is just two black-headed mannikins.

Marken

An excursion which everyone will say is indispensable takes one to Marken (pronounced Marriker); but I have my doubts. The island may be reached from Amsterdam either by boat, going by way of canal and returning by sea, or one may take the steam tram to Monnickendam or Edam, and then fall into the hands of a Marken mariner. To escape his invitations to sail thither is a piece of good fortune that few visitors succeed in achieving.

Marken in winter wears perhaps a genuine air; in the season of tourists it has too much the suggestion of *opera bouffe*. The man's costume is comic beyond reason; the inhabitants are picturesque, of set design; the old women at their doorways are too consciously the owners of quaint habitations, glimpses of which catch the eye by well-studied accident. I must confess to being glad to leave: for either one was intruding upon a simple folk entirely surrounded by water; or the simple folk, knowing human nature, had made itself up and sent out its importunate young from strictly mercenary motives. In either case Marken is no place for a sensitive traveller. The theory that the Marken people are savages is certainly a wrong one; they have carried certain of the privileges of civilization very far and can take care of themselves with unusual cleverness. Moreover, no savage would cover his legs with such garments as the men adhere to.

What is wrong with Marken is that for the most part it subsists on sight-seers, which is bad; and it too generally suggests that a stage-manager, employed by a huge Trust, is somewhere in the background. It cannot be well with a community that encourages its children to beg of visitors.

The women, however, look sensible: fine upstanding creatures with a long curl of yellow hair on each side of their faces. One meets them now and then in Amsterdam streets, by no means dismayed by the traffic and bustle. Their head-dresses are striking and gay, and the front of their bodices is elaborately embroidered, the prevailing colours being red and pink. Bright hues are also very popular within doors on this island, perhaps

by way of counteracting the external monotony, the Marken walls being washed with yellow and hung with Delft plates, while the furniture and hangings all have a cheerful gaiety.

The island is flat save for the mounds on which its villages are built, each house standing on poles to allow the frequent inundations of the winter free way. If one has the time and money it is certainly better to visit Marken in a fishing boat than in the steamer—provided that one can trust oneself to navigators masquerading in such bloomers.

Volendam

To the little fishing village of Volendam, paradise of quaint costumes and gay prettinesses, artists invariably resort. Like much of Monnickendam, and indeed almost all Dutch seaside settlements, the village is, if not below sea-level, almost invisible from the water, on account of an obliterating dyke. At the Helder one can consider the rampart reasonable, but here, where there is no foe but the Zuyder Zee, it may seem fantastic. If we lived there in winter, however, the precaution would soon be justified, for the Zuyder Zee can on occasion roar like a lion. It is odd to reflect that Volendam, Monnickendam, and Marken may become ordinary inland hamlets in the midst of green fields if the great scheme for draining the Zuyder Zee is carried through.

If the people and village of Volendam are to be described in a phrase, they may be called better Markeners in a better Marken. The decoration of the pointed red-roofed houses is similar; there is the same prevailing and very ingratiating passion for the blue Delft—and a very beautiful blue too; the clothes of the men and women have a family resemblance. But Volendam is in every way better—although its open drain is a sore trial: it is more human, more natural. The men hold the record for Dutch taciturnity. They also smoke more persistently and wear larger sabots than I saw anywhere else, leaving them outside their doors with a religious exactitude that suggests that

the goodwives of Volendam know how to be obeyed. The women discard the Marken ringlets and richness of embroidery, but in the matter of petticoats they approach Scheveningen and Huizen standards. Their jewellery resolves itself into a coral necklace, while the men wear silver buttons—both coming down from mother to daughter, and father to son.

The fishing fleet of Volendam sails as far as the North Sea, but it is always in Volendam by Saturday morning. Hence if you would see the Volendam fishermen in their greatest strength, the time to visit the little town is at the end of the week or on Sunday.

The Aanspreker

That the Dutch die there is no doubt, for a funeral is an almost daily object, and the aanspreker is continually hurrying by; but where are the dead? The cemeteries are minute, and the churches have no churchyards. Of Death, however, when he comes, the nation is very proud. The mourning customs are severe and enduring. No expense is spared in spreading the interesting tidings. It is for this purpose that the aanspreker flourishes in his importance and pomp. Draped heavily in black, from house to house he moves, wherever the slightest ties of personal or business acquaintanceship exist, and announces his news. A lady of Hilversum tells me that she was once formally the recipient of the message, "Please, ma'am, the baker's compliments, and he's dead," the time and place of the interment following. I said draped in black, but the aanspreker is not so monotonous an official as that. He has his subtleties, his nuances. If the deceased is a child, he adds a white rosette; if a bachelor or a maid, he intimates the fact by degrees of trimming.

The aanspreker was once occasionally assisted by the huilebalk, but I am afraid his day is over. The huilebalk accompanied the aansprekers from house to house and wept on the completion of their sad message. He wore a wide-awake hat with a

very large brim and a long-tailed coat. If properly paid, says my informant, real tears coursed down his cheeks; in any case his presence was a luxury possible only to the rich.

The aanspreker is called in also at the other end of life. Assuming a more jocund air, he trips from house to house announcing little strangers.

That the Dutch are a healthy people one might gather also from the character of their druggists. In this country, even in very remote towns, one may reveal one's symptoms to a chemist or his assistant feeling certain that he will know more or less what to prescribe. But in Holland the chemists are often young women, who preside over shops in which one cannot repose any confidence. One likes a chemist's shop at least to look as if it contained reasonable remedies. These do not. Either our shops contain too many drugs or these too few. The chemist's sign, a large comic head with its mouth wide open (known as the gaper), is also subversive of confidence. A chemist's shop is no place for jokes. In Holland one must, in short, do as the Dutch do, and remain well.

Lovers of North Holland

Ireland tells us that the front doors of many of Broek's houses are opened only twice in their owners' lives—when they marry and when they die. For the rest the back door must serve. The custom is not confined to Broek, but is found all over North Holland. These ceremonial front doors are often very ornate. It was also at Broek that Ireland picked up his information as to the best means of winning the Dutch heart. "Laughable as it may seem, a safe expedient to insure the affections of the lower class of these lasses, is to arm yourself well with gingerbread. The first question the lover is asked after knocking at the door, when the parents are supposed to be in bed, is, 'Have you any gingerbread?' If he replies in the affirmative, he finds little difficulty in gaining admission. A second visit ensures his success, and the lady yields."

I can add a little to this. When a young man thinks of courting he first speaks to the parents, and if they are willing to encourage him he is asked to spend the evening with their daughter. They then discreetly retire to bed and leave the world to him. Under his arm is a large cake, not necessarily of gingerbread, and this he deposits on the table, with or without words. If he is acceptable in the girl's eyes she at once puts some more peat on the fire. He then knows that all is well with him: the cake is cut, and Romance is king. But if the fire is not replenished he must gather up his cake and return to his home. A very favorite Dutch picture represents "The Cutting of the Cake." I have heard that the Dutch wife takes her husband's left arm; the Dutch fiancée her lover's right.

HILAIRE BELLOC

Essayist, novelist, story-writer

Mr. Belloc comes of interesting background and ancestry. He is a Frenchman by birth, an Englishman by naturalization. Some of his ancestors were distinguished officers in Napoleon's army, his grandfather was an artist, and his father a lawyer. He was educated at Oxford, and he has taken an active part in English politics and has traveled widely. It is not to be wondered at, then, that his interests in literature are varied. He has written amusing children's books and books of travel, history (particularly French), criticism, poetry, and the familiar essay. These broadening experiences and his intellectual inheritance probably have everything to do with his ease of style. Another interesting fact is that he personally knew Cardinal Newman, who was a master of style.

"I should choose the last paragraphs of *Europe and the Faith*, the preface of my *Marie Antoinette*, and an essay called 'The Mowing of a Field,' in a book of essays the title of which is *Hills and the Sea*."

—HILAIRE BELLOC.

THE MOWING OF A FIELD [1]

There is a valley in South England remote from ambition and from fear, where the passage of strangers is rare and unperceived, and where the scent of the grass in summer is breathed only by those who are native to that unvisited land. The roads to the Channel do not traverse it; they choose upon either side easier passes over the range. One track alone leads up through it to the hills, and this is changeable: now green where men have little occasion to go, now a good road where it nears the homesteads and barns. The woods grow steep above the slopes; they reach sometimes the very summit of the heights, or, when they cannot attain them, fill in and clothe the combes. And, in between, along the floor of the valley, deep pastures and their silence are bordered by lawns of chalky grass and the small yew trees of the Downs.

The clouds that visit its sky reveal themselves beyond the one great rise, and sail, white and enormous, to the other, and sink beyond that other. But the plains above which they have travelled and the Weald to which they go, the people of the valley cannot see and hardly recall. The wind, when it reaches such fields, is no longer a gale from the salt, but fruitful and soft, an inland breeze; and those whose blood was nourished here feel in that wind the fruitfulness of our orchards and all the life that all things draw from the air.

In this place, when I was a boy, I pushed through a fringe of beeches that made a complete screen between me and the world, and I came to a glade called No Man's Land. I climbed beyond it, and I was surprised and glad, because from the ridge of that glade I saw the sea. To this place very lately I returned.

The many things that I recovered as I came up the country-

[1] Reprinted from *Hills and the Sea*, by permission of the author.

side were not less charming than when a distant memory had enshrined them, but much more. Whatever veil is thrown by a longing recollection had not intensified nor even made more mysterious the beauty of that happy ground; not in my very dreams of morning had I, in exile, seen it more beloved or more rare. Much also that I had forgotten now returned to me as I approached—a group of elms, a little turn of the parson's wall, a small paddock beyond the graveyard close, cherished by one man, with a low wall of very old stone guarding it all around. And all these things fulfilled and amplified my delight, till even the good vision of the place, which I had kept so many years, left me and was replaced by its better reality. "Here," I said to myself, "is a symbol of what some say is reserved for the soul: pleasure of a kind which cannot be imagined save in the moment when at last it is attained."

When I came to my own gate and my own field, and had before me the house I knew, I looked around a little (though it was already evening), and I saw that the grass was standing as it should stand when it is ready for the scythe. For in this, as in everything that a man can do—of those things at least which are very old—there is an exact moment when they are done best. And it has been remarked of whatever rules us that it works blunderingly, seeing that the good things given to man are not given at the precise moment when they would have filled him with delight. But, whether this be true or false, we can choose the just turn of the seasons in everything we do of our own will, and especially in the making of hay. Many think that hay is best made when the grass is thickest; and so they delay until it is rank and in flower, and has already heavily pulled the ground. And there is another false reason for delay, which is wet weather. For very few will understand (though it comes year after year) that we have rain always in South England between the sickle and the scythe, or say just after the weeks of east wind are over. First we have a week of sudden warmth, as though the South had come to see us all; then we have the weeks of east and south-east wind; and then we have more or

less rain of which I spoke, and which always astonishes the world. Now it is just before, or during, or at the very end of that rain—but not later—that grass should be cut for hay. True, upland grass, which is always thin, should be cut earlier than the grass in the bottoms and along the water meadows; but not even the latest, even in the wettest seasons, should be left (as it is) to flower and even to seed. For what we get when we store our grass is not a harvest of something ripe, but a thing just caught in its prime before maturity: as witness that our corn and straw are best yellow, but our hay is best green. So also Death should be represented with a scythe and Time with a sickle; for Time can only take what is ripe, but Death comes always too soon. In a word, then, it is always much easier to cut grass too late than too early; and I, under that evening and come back to these pleasant fields, looked at the grass and knew that it was time. June was in full advance: it was the beginning of that season when the night has already lost her foothold of the earth and hovers over it, never quite descending, but mixing sunset with the dawn.

Next morning, before it was yet broad day, I awoke, and thought of the mowing. The birds were already chattering in the trees beside my window, all except the nightingale, which had left and flown away to the Weald, where he sings all summer by day as well as by night in the oaks and the hazel spinneys, and especially along the little river Adur, one of the rivers of the Weald. The birds and thought of the mowing had awakened me, and I went down the stairs and along the stone floors to where I could find a scythe; and when I took it from its nail, I remembered how, fourteen years ago, I had last gone out with my scythe, just so, into the fields at morning. In between that day and this were many things, cities and armies, and a confusion of books, mountains and the desert, and horrible great breadths of sea.

When I got out into the long grass the sun was not yet risen, but there were already many colors in the eastern sky, and I made haste to sharpen my scythe, so that I might get to the cutting before the dew should dry. Some say that it is best to

wait till all the dew has risen, so as to get the grass quite dry from the very first. But, though it is an advantage to get the grass quite dry, yet it is not worth while to wait till the dew has risen. For, in the first place, you lose many hours of work (and those the coolest), and next—which is more important—you lose that great ease and thickness in cutting which comes of the dew. So I at once began to sharpen my scythe.

There is an art also in the sharpening of a scythe, and it is worth describing carefully. Your blade must be dry, and that is why you will see men rubbing the scythe-blade with grass before they whet it. Then also your rubber must be quite dry, and on this account it is a good thing to lay it on your coat and keep it there during all your day's mowing. The scythe you stand upright, with the blade pointing away from you, and you put your left hand firmly on the back of the blade, grasping it: then you pass the rubber first down one side of the blade-edge and then down the other, beginning near the handle and going to the point and working quickly and hard. When you first do this you will, perhaps, cut your hand; but it is only at first that such an accident will happen to you.

To tell when the scythe is sharp enough, this is the rule. First the stone clangs and grinds against the iron harshly; then it rings musically to one note; then, at last, it purrs as though the iron and stone were exactly suited. When you hear this, your scythe is sharp enough; and I, when I heard it in that June dawn, with everything quite silent except the birds, let down the scythe and bent myself to mow.

When one does anything anew, after so many years, one fears very much for one's trick or habit. But all things once learnt are easily recoverable, and I very soon recovered the swing and power of the mower. Mowing well and mowing badly—or rather not mowing at all—are separated by very little; as is also true of writing verse, of playing the fiddle, and of dozens of other things, but of nothing more than of believing. For the bad or young or untaught mower without tradition, the mower Promethean, the mower original and contemptuous of

the past, does all these things: He leaves great crescents of grass uncut. He digs the point of the scythe hard into the ground with a jerk. He loosens the handles and even the fastening of the blade. He twists the blade with his blunders, he blunts the blade, he chips it, dulls it, or breaks it clean off at the tip. If any one is standing by he cuts him in the ankle. He sweeps up into the air wildly, with nothing to resist his stroke. He drags up earth with the grass, which is like making the meadow bleed. But the good mower who does things just as they should be done and have been for a hundred thousand years, falls into none of these fooleries. He goes forward very steadily, his scythe-blade just barely missing the ground, every grass falling; the swish and rhythm of his mowing are always the same.

So great an art can only be learnt by continual practice; but this much is worth writing down, that, as in all good work, to know the thing with which you work is the core of the affair. Good verse is best written on good paper with an easy pen, not with a lump of coal on a whitewashed wall. The pen thinks for you; and so does the scythe mow for you if you treat it honourably and in a manner that makes it recognize its service. The manner is this. You must regard the scythe as a pendulum that swings, not as a knife that cuts. A good mower puts no more strength into his stroke than into his lifting. Again, stand up to your work. The bad mower, eager and full of pain, leans forward and tries to force the scythe through the grass. The good mower, serene and able, stands as nearly straight as the shape of the scythe will let him, and follows up every stroke closely, moving his left foot forward. Then also let every stroke get well away. Mowing is a thing of ample gestures, like drawing a cartoon. Then, again, get yourself into a mechanical and repetitive mood: be thinking of anything at all but your mowing, and be anxious only when there seems some interruption to the monotony of the sound. In this mowing should be like one's prayers—all of a sort and always the same, and so made that you can establish a monotony and work them, as it were, with half your mind: that happier half, the half that does not bother.

In this way, when I had recovered the art after so many years, I went forward over the field, cutting lane after lane through the grass, and bringing out its most secret essences with the sweep of the scythe until the air was full of odours. At the end of every lane I sharpened my scythe and looked back at the work done, and then carried my scythe down again upon my shoulder to begin another. So, long before the bell rang in the chapel above me—that is, long before six o'clock, which is the time for the *Angelus*—I had many swathes already lying in order parallel like soldiery; and the high grass yet standing, making a great contrast with the shaven part, looked dense and high. As it says in the Ballad of Val-ès-Dunes, where—

> The tall son of the Seven Winds
> Came riding out of the Hither-hythe,

and his horse-hoofs (you will remember) trampled into the press and made a gap in it, and his sword (as you know)

> . . . was like a scythe
> In Arcus when the grass is high
> And all the swathes in order lie,
> And there's the bailiff standing by
> A gathering of the tithe.

So I mowed all that morning, till the houses awoke in the valley, and from some of them rose a little fragrant smoke, and men began to be seen.

I stood still and rested on my scythe to watch the awakening of the village, when I saw coming up to my field a man whom I had known in older times, before I had left the Valley.

He was of that dark silent race upon which all the learned quarrel, but which, by whatever meaningless name it may be called—Iberian, or Celtic, or what you will—is the permanent root of all England, and makes England wealthy and preserves it everywhere, except perhaps in the Fens and in a part of Yorkshire. Everywhere else you will find it active and strong. These people are intensive; their thoughts and their labours

turn inward. It is on account of their presence in these islands that our gardens are the richest in the world. They also love low rooms and ample fires and great warm slopes of thatch. They have, as I believe, an older acquaintance with the English air than any other of all the strains that make up England. They hunted in the Weald with stones, and camped in the pines in the green-sand. They lurked under the oaks of the upper rivers, and saw the legionaries go up, up the straight paved road from the sea. They helped the few pirates to destroy the towns, and mixed with those pirates and shared the spoils of the Roman villas, and were glad to see the captains and the priests destroyed. They remain; and no admixture of the Frisian pirates, or the Breton, or the Angevin and Norman conquerors, has very much affected their cunning eyes.

To this race, I say, belonged the man who now approached me. And he said to me, "Mowing?" And I answered, "Ar." Then he also said "Ar," as in duty bound; for so we speak to each other in the Stenes of the Downs.

Next he told me that, as he had nothing to do, he would lend me a hand; and I thanked him warmly, or, as we say, "kindly." For it is a good custom of ours always to treat bargaining as though it were a courteous pastime; and though what he was after was money, and what I wanted was his labour at the least pay, yet we both played the comedy that we were free men, the one granting a grace and the other accepting it. For the dry bones of commerce, avarice and method and need, are odious to the Valley; and we cover them up with a pretty body of fiction and observances. Thus, when it comes to buying pigs, the buyer does not begin to decry the pig and the vendor to praise it, as is the custom with lesser men; but tradition makes them do business in this fashion:

First the buyer will go up to the seller when he sees him in his own steading, and, looking at the pig with admiration, the buyer will say that rain may or may not fall, or that we shall have snow or thunder, according to the time of year. Then the seller, looking critically at the pig, will agree that the weather

is as his friend maintains. There is no haste at all; great leisure marks the dignity of their exchange. And the next step is, that the buyer says: "That's a fine pig you have there, Mr.———" (giving the seller's name). "Ar, powerful fine pig." Then the seller, saying also "Mr." (for twin brothers rocked in one cradle give each other ceremonious observance here), the seller, I say, admits, as though with reluctance, the strength and beauty of the pig, and falls into deep thought. Then the buyer says, as though moved by a great desire, that he is ready to give so much for the pig, naming half the proper price, or a little less. Then the seller remains in silence for some moments; and at last begins to shake his head slowly, till he says: "I don't be thinking of selling the pig, anyways." He will also add that a party only Wednesday offered him so much for the pig—and he names about double the proper price. Thus all ritual is duly accomplished; and the solemn act is entered upon with reverence and in a spirit of truth. For when the buyer uses this phrase: "I'll tell you what I *will* do," and offers within half a crown of the pig's value, the seller replies that he can refuse him nothing, and names half a crown above its value; and the difference is split, the pig is sold, and in the quiet soul of each runs the peace of something accomplished.

Thus do we buy a pig or land or labour or malt or lime, always with elaboration and set forms; and many a London man has paid double and more for his violence and his greedy haste and very unchivalrous higgling. As happened with the land at Underwaltham, which the mortgagees had begged and implored the estate to take at twelve hundred, and had privately offered to all the world at a thousand, but which a sharp direct man, of the kind that makes great fortunes, a man in a motor car, a man in a fur coat, a man of few words, bought for two thousand three hundred before my very eyes, protesting that they might take his offer or leave it; and all because he did not begin by praising the land.

Well then, this man I spoke of offered to help me, and he went to get his scythe. But I went into the house and brought

out a gallon jar of small ale for him and for me; for the sun was now very warm, and small ale goes well with mowing. When we had drunk some of this ale in mugs called "I see you," we took each a swathe, he a little behind me because he was the better mower; and so for many hours we swung, one before the other, mowing and mowing at the tall grass of the field. And the sun rose to noon and we were still at our mowing; and we ate food, but only for a little while, and we took again to our mowing. And at last there was nothing left but a small square of grass, standing like a square of linesmen who keep their formation, tall and unbroken, with all the dead lying around them when a battle is over and done.

Then for some little time I rested after all those hours; and the man and I talked together, and a long way off we heard in another field the musical sharpening of a scythe.

The sunlight slanted powdered and mellow over the breadth of the valley; for the day was nearing its end. I went to fetch rakes from the steading; and when I had come back the last of the grass had fallen, and all the field lay flat and smooth, with the very green short grass in lanes between the dead and yellow swathes.

These swathes we raked into cocks to keep them from the dew against our return at daybreak; and we made the cocks as tall and steep as we could, for in that shape they best keep off the dew, and it is easier also to spread them after the sun has risen. Then we raked up every straggling blade, till the whole field was a clean floor for the tedding and the carrying of the hay next morning. The grass we had mown was but a little over two acres; for that is all the pasture on my little tiny farm.

When we had done all this, there fell upon us the beneficent and deliberate evening; so that as we sat a little while together near the rakes, we saw the valley more solemn and dim around us and all the trees and hedgerows quite still, and held by a complete silence. Then I paid my companion his wage, and bade him a good night, till we should meet in the same place before sunrise.

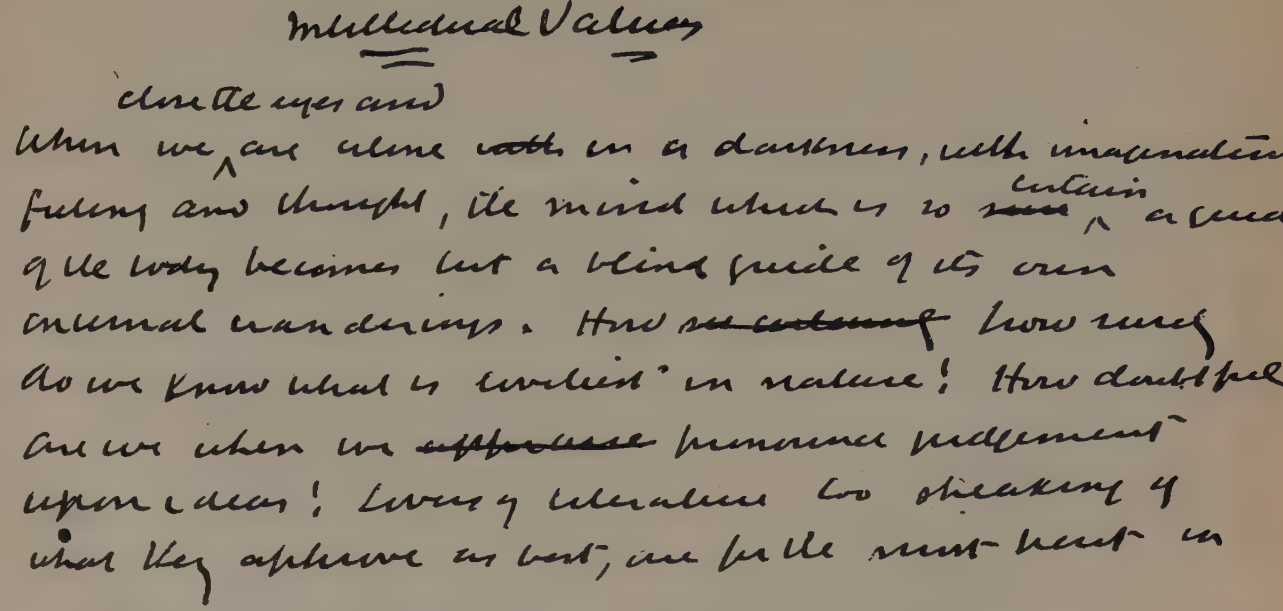
He went off with a slow and steady progress, as all our peasants do, making their walking a part of the easy but continual labour of their lives. But I sat on, watching the light creep around toward the north and change, and the waning moon coming up as though by stealth behind the woods of No Man's Land.

"A.E."

Poet, essayist

"A.E.", or Mr. George William Russell, is Ireland's mystic poet and politician. No two callings seem more far removed; yet, in his case they are inseparable. "A.E." is a man who sees visions. It is very difficult for those who are not mystics to realize the spiritual experiences of those who are. Yet upon these experiences is dependent "A.E." 's whole philosophy of literature and life. He is one of the most notable figures in the Irish Coöperative Movement and his newspaper *The Irish Homestead* has been called "the most ably-edited and skillfully-written organ in Ireland." He writes weekly a large part of what goes into it. Meanwhile he has written poetry and poetic essays of his mystical experiences. He has illustrated his ideas with mystical paintings. A characteristic book is his *The Candle of Vision*, the Preface of which explains his purpose:

When I am in my room looking upon the walls I have painted I see there reflections of the personal life, but when I look through the windows I see a living nature and landscapes not painted by hands. So, too, when I meditate I feel in the images and thoughts which throng about me the reflections of personality, but there are also windows in the soul through which can be seen images created not by human but by the divine imagination. I have tried according to my capacity to report about the divine order and to discriminate between that which was self-begotten fantasy and that which came from a higher sphere. These retrospects and meditations are the efforts of an artist and poet to relate his own vision to the vision of the seers and writers of the sacred books, and to discover what element of truth lay in those imaginations.



Facsimile of a page of manuscript from the works of "A.E."

"You ask about my method of writing a book. I first try to get a skeleton of the whole argument, a scenario, the dramatists would call it, so that this will be clear in my mind and everything will be written in proportion. When I start to write I have no other idea than to tell the truth, *i.e.* the truth I see, feel, think, or imagine—to make the words as proper a mirror of my mood as I can. I write and rewrite; I think *The Candle of Vision* was written a dozen times over and *The Interpretations* as often. My second intention is to be as concentrated as possible consistent with truth-telling. My ideal prose would be as musical and shapely as verse, every sentence as condensed and pondered over as a verse in poetry, and I would make use of assonance or alliteration to get a quality of sound which would make the sentence be remembered and the idea with it. I am so busy a man that I have not time or perhaps capacity to carry out my own intentions. I naturally would write as the pre-Raphaelites painted, minutely and trying to make every sentence shapely. Life has denied me time to do what I desire. But I made the best approximation I could to my ideal in the few books I have written. I started writing with the idea that prose could be as intense and concentrated as musical and beautiful poetry. I was only able in short passages to satisfy myself that my prose was as good as my verse. I found it natural to be concentrated when writing a lyric, but it was a labour to concentrate when writing prose, as we all talk a great deal too much, using too many words in our speech and the habit follows us when we write."

—George William Russell.

RETROSPECT[1]

I had travelled all day and was tired, but I could not rest by the hearth in the cottage on the hill. My heart was beating with too great an excitement. After my year in the city I felt like a child who wickedly stays from home through a long day, and who returns frightened and penitent at nightfall, wondering whether it will be received with forgiveness by its mother. Would the Mother of us all receive me again as one of her children? Would the winds with wandering voices be as before the evangelists of her love? Or would I feel like an outcast amid the mountains, the dark valleys and the shining lakes? I knew if benediction came how it would come. I would sit among the rocks with shut eyes, waiting humbly as one waits in the antechambers of the mighty, and if the invisible ones chose me as companion they would begin with a soft breathing of their intimacies, creeping on me with shadowy affection like children who steal nigh to the bowed head and suddenly whisper fondness in the ear before it has even heard a footfall. So I stole out of the cottage and over the dark ridges to the place of rocks, and sat down, and let the coolness of the night chill and still the fiery dust in the brain. I waited trembling for the faintest touch, the shyest breathing of the Everlasting within my soul, the sign of reception and forgiveness. I knew it would come. I could not so desire what was not my own, and what is our own we cannot lose. Desire is hidden identity. The darkness drew me heavenward. From the hill the plains beneath slipped away grown vast and vague, remote and still. I seemed alone with immensity, and there came at last that melting of the divine darkness into the life within me for which I prayed. Yes,

[1] From *The Candle of Vision.* Reprinted by permission of The Macmillan Company.

I still belonged, however humbly, to the heavenly household. I was not outcast. Still, though by a thread fine as that by which a spider hangs from the rafters, my being was suspended from the habitations of eternity. I longed to throw my arms about the hills, to meet with kisses the lips of the seraph wind. I felt the gaiety of childhood springing up through weariness and age, for to come into contact with that which is eternally young is to have that childhood of the spirit it must attain ere it can be moulded by the Magician of the Beautiful and enter the House of Many Mansions.

I had not always this intimacy with nature. I never felt a light in childhood which faded in manhood into the common light of day, nor do I believe that childhood is any nearer than age to this being. If it were so what would the spirit have to hope for after youth was gone? I was not conscious in my boyhood of any heaven lying about me. I lived in the city, and the hills from which aid was to come to me were only a far flush of blue on the horizon. Yet I was drawn to them, and as years passed and legs grew longer I came nearer and nearer until at last one day I found myself on the green hillside. I came to play with other boys, but years were yet to pass before the familiar places grew strange once more and the mountains dense with fiery forms and awful as Sinai.

While the child is still in its mother's arms it is nourished by her, yet it does not know it is a mother which feeds it. It knows later in whose bosom it has lain. As the mother nourishes the body so the Mighty Mother nourishes the soul. Yet there are but few who pay reverence where reverence is due, and that is because this benign deity is like a mother who indulges the fancies of her children. With some she imparts life to their own thoughts. Others she endows with the vision of her own heart. Even of these last some love in silence, being afraid to speak of the majesty which smiled on them, and others deceived think with pride: "This vision is my own."

I was like these last for a long time. I was aged about sixteen or seventeen years, when I, the slackest and least ideal of boys,

with my life already made dark by those desires of body and heart with which we so soon learn to taint our youth, became aware of a mysterious life quickening within my life. Looking back I know not of anything in friendship, anything I had read, to call this forth. It was, I thought, self-begotten. I began to be astonished with myself, for, walking along country roads, intense and passionate imaginations of another world, of an interior nature began to overpower me. They were like strangers who suddenly enter a house, who brush aside the doorkeeper, and who will not be denied. Soon I knew they were the rightful owners and heirs of the house of the body, and the doorkeeper was only one who was for a time in charge, who had neglected his duty, and who had pretended to ownership. The boy who existed before was an alien. He hid himself when the pilgrim of eternity took up his abode in the dwelling. Yet, whenever the true owner was absent, the sly creature reappeared and boasted himself as master once more.

That being from a distant country who took possession of the house began to speak in a language difficult to translate. I was tormented by limitations of understanding. Somewhere about me I knew there were comrades who were speaking to me, but I could not know what they said. As I walked in the evening down the lanes scented by the honeysuckle my senses were expectant of some unveiling about to take place, I felt that beings were looking in upon me out of the true home of man. They seemed to be saying to each other of us, "Soon they will awaken; soon they will come to us again," and for a moment I almost seemed to mix with their eternity. The tinted air glowed before me with intelligible significance like a face, a voice. The visible world became like a tapestry blown and stirred by winds behind it. If it would but raise for an instant I knew I would be in Paradise. Every form on that tapestry appeared to be the work of gods. Every flower was a word, a thought. The grass was speech; the trees were speech; the waters were speech; the winds were speech. They were the Army of the Voice marching on to conquest and dominion over the spirit; and I listened

with my whole being, and then these apparitions would fade away and I would be the mean and miserable boy once more. So might one have felt who had been servant of the prophet, and had seen him go up in the fiery chariot, and the world had no more light or certitude in it with that passing. I knew these visitations for what they were and named them truly in my fantasy, for writing then in the first verses of mine which still seem to me to be poetry, I said of the earth that we and all things were her dreams:

> She is rapt in dreams divine.
> As her clouds of beauty pass
> On our glowing hearts they shine,
> Mirrored there as in a glass.
>
> Earth, whose dreams are we and they,
> With her deep heart's gladness fills
> All our human lips can say
> Or the dawn-fired singer trills.

Yet such is human nature that I still felt vanity as if this vision was mine, and I acted like one who comes across the treasure-house of a king, and spends the treasure as if it were his own. We may indeed have a personal wisdom, but spiritual vision is not to speak of as ours any more than we can say at the rising of the sun: "This glory is mine." By the sudden uprising of such vanities in the midst of vision I was often outcast, and found myself in an instant like those warriors of Irish legend, who had come upon a lordly house and feasted there and slept, and when they woke they were on the barren hillside, and the Faed Fia was drawn about that lordly house. Yet though the imagination apprehended truly that this beauty was not mine, and hailed it by its heavenly name, for some years my heart was proud, for as the beauty sank into memory it seemed to become a personal possession, and I said "I imagined this" when I should humbly have said, "The curtain was a little lifted that I might see." But the day was to come when I could not deny the Mighty Mother the reverence due, when I was

indeed to know by what being I had been nourished, and to be made sweet and mad as a lover with a consciousness of her intermingling spirit.

The sages of old found that at the close of intense meditation their being was drawn into union with that which they contemplated. All desire tends to bring about unity with the object adored, and this is no less true of spiritual and elemental than of bodily desire; and I, with my imagination more and more drawn to adore an ideal nature, was tending to that vital contact in which what at first was apprehended in fantasy would become the most real of all things. When that certitude came I felt as Dante might have felt after conceiving of Beatrice close at his side and in the Happy World, if, after believing it a dream, half hoping that it might hereafter be a reality, that beloved face before his imagination grew suddenly intense, vivid and splendidly shining, and he knew beyond all doubt that her spirit was truly in that form, and had descended to dwell in it, and would be with him forevermore. So did I feel one warm summer day lying idly on the hillside, not then thinking of anything but the sunlight, and how sweet it was to drowse there, when, suddenly, I felt a fiery heart throb, and knew it was personal and intimate, and started with every sense dilated and intent, and turned inwards, and I heard first a music as of bells going away, away into that wondrous underland whither, as legend relates, the Danaan gods withdrew; and then the heart of the hills was opened to me, and I knew there was no hill for those who were there, and they were unconscious of the ponderous mountain piled above the palaces of light, and the winds were sparkling and diamond clear, yet full of colour as an opal, as they glittered through the valley, and I knew the Golden Age was all about me, and it was we who had been blind to it but that it had never passed away from the world.

JAMES NORMAN HALL

Essayist, story-writer

The subjects of Mr. Hall's writing come from direct experience. He served in the Great War and then contributed essays to the *Atlantic Monthly* and other magazines on his experiences and published two books, *Kitchener's Mob* and *High Adventure*. Since the war he has been living at Papeete, Society Islands, Tahiti, where he finds life comfortable and free from the petty cares of a country that is interested in material progress. He and Mr. Charles Nordhoff collaborated in writing *Faery Lands of the South Seas*. Mr. Hall has written a number of accounts of his experiences in Papeete, one of which is republished here. In answer to the questions put to Mr. Hall concerning his writing habits, he wrote the essay "Cacoëthes Scribendi," which was published in the *Atlantic Monthly*.

According to the lexicographers, *cacoëthes* is an ill habit, or the itch for doing something unadvisable; and they invariably add: 'as in *scribendi cacoëthes*, scribbling mania.' Why is this the inevitable illustration? Why have these words been so long and so intimately associated? Dictionaries are social as well as etymological histories, summing up briefly the garnered wisdom of the ages upon innumerable subjects; and the deduction in this case is that the itch for writing has always been regarded, not only as an affliction, but as the most contagious and prevalent of afflictions.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that 'itch,' 'mania,' 'ill habit,' are misleading terms, by no means descriptive of a malady which, in its higher manifestations, is one of the noblest of all the diseases of the human spirit. Now and then, to be sure, even an illustrious victim speaks of it as though it were, in truth, nothing but a disgusting irritation, something to be ashamed of. Tolstoy, for example, in a letter written in mid-course of his career, said, 'I abstain from writing and feel a kind of moral purity, such as one feels from not smoking. I do not know how to rejoice sufficiently at having conquered that habit.' But I doubt whether Tolstoy was really as happy as he professed to be at the moment. If he abstained from writing, the reason was, more than likely, that his inspiration had failed him, temporarily, and he was trying to make a virtue of necessity. Had he been permanently cured, I venture to say that thenceforth he would have been the most miserable of men.

For a remarkable feature of this disease, and one of the most difficult to explain, is that, however great a victim's sufferings in the throes of it, the moment relief comes it is found to be no relief at all. I believe that the wondrous wise man in the nursery rhyme must have been suffering from *cacoëthes scribendi*. 'He jumped into a bramble bush, and scratched out both his eyes' was merely a pictorial way of saying that he found the disease intolerable and took heroic measures to effect a cure. Having momentarily regained his health, he found that condition even less endurable, and immediately elected to become ill again.

I have heard it said that an infallible as well as a permanent cure for the malady is the cooling salve of public indifference and neglect. Cooling this unguent undoubtedly is; but healing? I doubt it. One thinks of innumerable

instances which lead to a contrary opinion; of men, some of them rich in worldly possessions, and therefore under no compulsion to write; others wretchedly poor; some of remarkable and varied gifts; some with talents pathetically meagre; but all of them having this in common—that they spent their lives in obscure and solitary literary toil without once hearing a heartening shout of public acclaim.

Consider for a moment a particular, and by no means an exceptional, case—that of Samuel Butler. Although he sometimes wrote music or painted pictures, he was first and last a literary man, and during his life he published fourteen books, all at his own expense. Only one, *Erewhon*, netted him even a small profit, and his return from that was only sixty-two pounds and some odd shillings. The others were total failures, commercially. Butler was out of pocket 779 pounds, 18 shillings, 1½ pence for the lot of them. After *Erewhon*, his most successful book was *Life and Habit*, which found six hundred and forty purchasers, and the least successful a volume of essays, of which not a single copy was sold. Nevertheless, Butler continued writing to the end of his days. There is an interesting note in his *Journal*, published after his death, with reference to his books and how they came to be written. 'I never make them,' he said; 'they grow; they come to me and insist on being written, and on being such and such. I did not want to write *Erewhon*. I wanted to go on painting and found it an abominable nuisance being dragged willy-nilly into writing it. So with all my books—the subjects were never of my own choosing; they pressed themselves upon me with more force than I could resist. If I had not liked the subjects I should have kicked, and nothing would have got me to do them at all. . . .' That

final statement I don't for a moment believe. He might have kicked, but he would have written nevertheless.

Mr. Arthur Machen, the author of those strange and memorable tales, *The Great God Pan*, *The Hill of Dreams*, *The Secret Glory*, and so forth, furnishes another example of a man who was not deterred from writing by the lack of public encouragement. He resembles Samuel Butler in that his peculiar temperament, his own predilections, as well as the outward circumstances of his life, seem to have made it necessary that he should write the books he did write, and only those. Although he is an artist in a small and lonely field, for pure, passionate, lifelong devotion to the task of cultivating its grudging soil I doubt whether his equal can be found in all the history of letters. Certainly there has never been a more heroic sufferer from the dread scourge—*cacoëthes scribendi*. His volume of reminiscences, *Far Off Things*, contains a passage that needs to be quoted in full, it puts so well the case for all men of limited talent who are searching for the way to the full heaven of Art which is never to be theirs:—

> No; the only course is to go on stumbling and struggling and blundering like a man lost in a dense thicket on a dark night; a thicket, I say, of rebounding boughs that punish with the sting of a whiplash, of thorns that savagely lacerate the flesh,—it is the flesh of the heart, alas! that they tear,—of sharp rocks of agony and black pools of despair. Such is the obscure wood of the literary life; such, at least, it was to me. You struggle to find your way; but again and again you ask yourself whether, for you, there is any way. You think you have hit upon a lucky track at last. And lo! before your feet is the black pit. And such is not alone the adventure of little, ineffectual struggling men. How old was glorious Cervantes, now serene forever amongst the immortals, when he found his way to that village of La Mancha? Fifty, I think, or almost fifty. And he had been striving for years to write plays, and poetry, and short stories of passion and sentiment; and it was only the roar of applause that thundered up from the world when the Knight and the Squire were seen riding over the hill that

convinced Cervantes that at last he had discovered his true path; if indeed he were ever convinced of the magnitude and majesty of the achievement of *Don Quixote*.

And if these things are done with the great, what will be done with the little? If the clear-voiced leaders of the everlasting choir are to suffer so and agonize, what of miserable little Welshmen stammering and stuttering by the Wandle, in the obscure rectory among the hills, in waste places by Shepherd's Bush, in gloomy Great Russell Street, where the ghosts of dead, disappointed authors go sighing to and fro? For the fate of the little literary man there is no articulate speech that is sufficient; one must fall back upon aoi, or oimoi, or alas, or some such vague lament of unutterable woe.

It is a pity that no one competent to do so has ever made a study, historically and pathologically, of the *cacoëthes scribendi*. If ever such a study is made, Mr. Machen's two volumes, *Things Near and Far* and *Far Off Things*, should be consulted. He has gone into the facts of his own case with painstaking thoroughness, and has reached certain conclusions that need to be tested in the light of wider evidence. For example: like Samuel Butler he kept a careful record of his returns from the sale of his books. He runs through the list of these books, written between 1880 and 1922, and finds that there are eighteen titles. His total receipts for these eighteen volumes, which cost him forty-two years of toil, amounted to the sum of six hundred and thirty-five pounds; in other words, for nearly half a century of labor, he had been paid at the rate of fifteen pounds and a few shillings per annum. 'It seems clear,' he adds, 'that my literary activities cannot be adequately accounted for on the hypothesis of mere greed and moneygrubbing.' Then he wonders what the motive, or motives, can be that induce men to devote their lives to literature—why it is that so many writers are willing to endure horrible poverty, disappointment, mortification, and despair for such slender rewards, for no re-

ward, in fact, that could be adequate. And his conclusion is this: that life, if looked at honestly, without shrinking, is intolerable, and that men will do anything to hide from the serious facts of life, 'follow any track, however desperate, trivial, perilous, or painful, if only these serious facts can be evaded and forgotten, though it be but for a few hours.' To write books is one method of escape—of hard escape, to be sure, but offering advantages over other methods to certain types of men.

I question the validity of this conclusion, not in individual instances, but as a general statement of the case. Life is not so horrible as all this comes to. Rabelais, Cervantes, Charles Dickens, the three artists whom Mr. Machen loves and reveres above all others, relished life keenly, and their enormous capacity for loving it as men was the measure of their greatness as artists. The writing of books was no attempt to escape on their part. Their purpose was, rather, to convince others of the foolishness of wanting to escape, by showing them the value of the gift of life, whether considered as a stirring adventure or a fascinating spectacle. I doubt whether any sweeping statement can be made with respect to the causes of *cacoëthes scribendi*. They seem to be as many and varied as its victims.

One of the most eminent of these victims, Joseph Conrad, would have been the last, surely, to have agreed with Mr. Machen that a literary career offers a means of escape from the keener sufferings of life. His recently published letters, many of them written in the midst of his work, reveal a man suffering, as an artist, the torments of the damned. There were, to be sure, contributory causes: ill health, worry about money, and the like, but these by no means account for such anguish of mind and spirit.

No one familiar with Conrad's work could have been unprepared for the revelations of the letters,—such tales as *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim*, *Victory*, *Under Western Eyes*, foreshadowed them,—but I doubt whether even the most sympathetic and discerning of his readers had any real conception, beforehand, of the grievous cost to him of the act of creation. But I have forgotten his autobiographical narrative, *A Personal Record:* there he did let the reader behind the scenes, so to speak, in one of the finest passages, considered merely as prose, that ever came from his pen. In speaking of the labor it cost him to write *Nostromo*, he said:—

> For twenty months, neglecting the common joys of life that fall to the lot of the humblest on this earth, I had, like the prophet of old, 'wrestled with the Lord' for my creation, for the headlands of the coast, for the darkness of the Placid Gulf, the light on the snows, the clouds in the sky, and for the breath of life that had to be blown into the shapes of men and women, of Latin and Saxon, of Jew and Gentile. These are, perhaps, strong words, but it is difficult to characterize otherwise the intimacy and the strain of a creative effort in which mind and will and conscience are engaged to the full, hour after hour, day after day, away from the world, and to the exclusion of all that makes life really lovable and gentle—something for which a material parallel can only be found in the everlasting sombre stress of the westward winter passage round Cape Horn.

It would be an excellent thing if this extract, suitably printed and framed, were to be hung on the walls of classrooms wherever English literature is studied and the art of writing professedly taught. It is reasonable to suppose that students, reading and rereading it day after day, would eventually not only remember the words, but would have a conception, at least, of what they mean—of the difficulties of the tasks confronting the serious artist, of the nature of the gifts necessary to conquer them, and of the *peine forte et dure* which is his portion in life. If, as a

result, some of them were to be deterred from undertaking literary careers, what a blessing that would be, both to themselves and to the public at large.

For there is no doubt that *cacoëthes scribendi* is becoming all too common a malady in these days. All of us journeymen scribblers are out of the discussion, of course. We are merely artisans, like blacksmiths, or carpenters, or bricklayers, and profess to be nothing more. But the countless host of contemporary novelists, dramatists, poets, make no such modest claims to modest merit. They demand to be taken seriously; and every year larger and yet larger numbers of young men and women join the ranks of this army, which threatens, eventually, to include the whole of our adult and adolescent population. Most of them are wholly lacking in gifts for their high calling, save only, occasionally, in that of dogged persistence. The importance of this quality becomes grossly exaggerated in their eyes. They believe it to be half the battle, when in reality it is not one quarter of it. They are misled, too, by the doctrine, so persistently preached at them in an era of cheaply won material success, that any man can achieve what he wills to achieve, if only he wills it hard enough. 'Lives of great men all remind us . . .' That faith is as widely disseminated and, I venture to say, as widely held to-day as it was half a century ago, when Longfellow so unhappily implanted it in every schoolboy's heart.

I sometimes think that liberty to aspire—supposed to be among the crowning glories of our democratic age—is really the most doubtful of its blessings. Certainly it is responsible for a great deal of needless misery. Consider this army of would-be artists, so many of whom are trying to stretch meagre gifts to the limit of their aspirations; or worse, creating gifts for themselves out of pure imagina-

tion. If they were denied the opportunity, how much happier they would be. There is a definition of art, to be found in Mr. Santayana's *Dialogues in Limbo*, which, I think, should also be printed and framed for hanging in classrooms. It is this: 'Art, which is action guided by knowledge, is the principle of benefit, and without art, the freer a man is the more miserable he must become.' Action guided by knowledge, particularly by self-knowledge, is precisely the kind of action so many of us know nothing about, and that is why we lead such inartistic lives—why, for example, we think we are authentic sufferers from *cacoëthes scribendi* when in reality our complaint no more resembles this glorious malady than 'Little Birdie in a Tree' resembles Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale.'

—James Norman Hall in "Cacoëthes Scribendi." [1]

[1] Reprinted from the *Atlantic Monthly* by permission of the publishers.

SING A SONG OF SIXPENCE [1]

Several years ago while living at Papeete, the capital of Tahiti in French Oceania, I found myself so low in funds that it seemed the part of wisdom to retire for a time to one of the remote country-districts until I could repair my fortunes. On the windward side of the island, thirty-five miles from the town, I found an attractive place about an acre in extent, with a one-room house on it precisely suited to my needs. My verandah overlooked the sea, and a clear mountain-stream flowed through my small domain, so that I had both fresh- and salt-water bathing; but a more important feature than either of these was the cheapness of the rental—$3.00 per month.

The land thereabout was so fertile that I decided to make a vegetable garden. In the tropics gardening would be a delightful occupation, and it might easily prove so profitable that I should never again need to resume my old trade of journalism. So I set to work, hopefully enough, glad of the necessity which had brought me to this decision.

The experience was disillusioning. Millions of tiny red ants carried away most of my seed, and, if any happened to be overlooked by the ants, the moment they sent forth green shoots these were sheared off by land crabs. After three months of patient effort all that I had to show for my toil was two ears of sweet corn (or, better, corncobs, for the rats had eaten off the kernels), three small tomatoes, and one squash. Having estimated my time as worth, at a modest figure, twenty cents an hour, and adding expenditure for seed, garden tools, and so forth, I found that these vegetables cost me $15.50 each.

Nevertheless I resolved to try once more, and ordered from

[1] Reprinted from the *Atlantic Monthly*, March, 1925, by permission of the publishers.

America a fresh supply of seed—a small quantity this time, for my funds were getting low; and furthermore, because of my innumerable enemies I meant to garden on a reduced front. But when I had cleared away the weeds—how marvelously they had flourished meanwhile, without care!—and saw the hosts of ants drawn up in waiting battalions, and the ground perforated like a sieve with the holes of land crabs, and a crab at the entrance of each hole, waving his keen-edged nippers in the air, I lost heart. "It is useless," I thought. "I'd better go back to journalism. Although not a lucrative profession, it is more profitable than gardening, and if I practise it faithfully I should be able to earn at least twenty cents an hour." Therefore I put away my tools and left Nature to plant whatever she would in my garden plot. She chose, as before, lantana and false tobacco.

That afternoon I was oiling and cleaning my typewriter, which had long been rusting in disuse, when a Chinaman named Hop Sing drove past my door in his dilapidated spring-wagon. He lived a quarter of a mile down the lagoon beach from my place, in a house which he himself had built from the boards of old packing-cases and roofed over with flattened-out biscuit-tins. I knew that he had a vegetable garden,—although he raised only sweet potatoes, watermelons, and a very tough variety of field corn,—so I hailed him, thinking he might find use for my dollar's worth of seed. He stopped, willingly enough, and I brought out to him a small packet each of beans, sweet corn (Golden Bantam), squash, pumpkin, lettuce, and tomato seed, all of the best varieties. Hop grunted expressions of mild interest while I explained what the various packets contained, and, when I had finished, asked: "How much?" "Oh, nothing at all," I replied. "A little present for you." He grasped the back seat to steady himself, perhaps, from the shock of receiving a present in that heathen land, and his black eyes glittered a trifle more brightly; but these were the only evidences of emotion—if it may be called emotion—that he displayed.

I forgot Hop Sing forthwith; there were other things to think of, chiefly the precarious state of my finances. Having counted

on my garden to furnish food, I had spent my little capital all too freely. Luckily my rent was paid several months in advance, but I had left only 128 francs—a little more than $5.00 American, at the current rate of exchange—and not a penny coming in until I had written something, story, sketch, or what not. The manuscript would have to be sent to America, and even though it should be accepted at once—a remote possibility—I could not hope to receive a cheque for at least three months. How was I to live in the meantime? There were bananas on my place and about fifty coconut palms; but my landlord, a native, reserved the right to both the nuts and the fruit, which was no more than fair, considering the modest rental he asked for house and grounds. The nuts were gathered as they fell and the bananas picked green to send to the Papeete market. I thought of fishing, but, remembering past experiences, I knew it would be foolish to count on that. I had no better luck at fishing than at gardening. No, I should have to live, somehow, on my 128 francs. That, of course, was impossible, so I resolved not even to try. I kept 28 francs for incidental expenses, spent 25 francs for native tobacco,—if I was to write I should have to smoke,—and the remainder for sweet potatoes and tinned beef. When the food was gone—well, I should worry about that when the time came.

Three days later I was on page two of a sketch which I planned to call "Settling Down in Polynesia," a story of some experiences I had had the year before. It was Sunday but necessity knows no holy days and I was doing my utmost to work. The mere fact of having to work seemed to make accomplishment impossible. I had written and rewritten the two pages of my story, vainly trying with each new draft to blacken page three. I was aroused from a mood of profound dejection by a knock at the back door. It was Hop Sing, and with him were his wife, their three small children, and a wizened little man with a scant beard and shaped like an interrogation point. Hop was dressed in a clean cotton undershirt and a pair of dungaree trousers.

His wife wore a pyjama-suit of black silk, and her hair was elaborately dressed. She carried one child on her arm, led another by the hand, and had a third, the baby, in a sling at her back. The children were beautifully dressed, and each of them had on a little skullcap of blue silk with flowers and butterflies embroidered on it in gold thread. The ancient wore a coat like a dressing-gown. He was very feeble and got down from the wagon with difficulty. It was pathetic to see the effort it cost him to walk. He would advance his staff a few inches and, grasping it with both hands, make a shuffling hop up to it. Then he would rest for a moment while gathering strength for a new effort. We helped him up the steps and at length all were seated on the verandah, Mrs. Sing sitting sidewise on her chair because of the baby in the sling. My unwashed breakfast dishes were on the kitchen table, and several slices of fried sweet potato on a greasy plate looked anything but appetizing. I was ashamed of the disorder of the place, the more so because this was the first visit I had ever had from the Sing family. Both Hop and his wife looked about in appraising fashion, but whether they approved or disapproved it was impossible to judge from their faces.

"My fadda-law," said Sing, indicating the old man.

I smiled and nodded.

A rather long silence followed. I felt embarrassed and could think of nothing to say.

"What name you?" he then asked.

I told him. Another interval of silence. I gave my forefinger to the baby on Mrs. Sing's lap. It clasped it gravely and held on. Mrs. Sing smiled. Her father, too, smiled; at least his face wrinkled suddenly, like a pool into which a pebble has been thrown. The small baby in the sling was asleep, its chubby arms sticking straight out. It looked like a doll rather than a real baby. The oldest child, a boy of six or seven, had the curious mature look and the air of profound wisdom common to many Chinese children.

Sing took from his pocket one of the packets of seeds I had given him.

"What name this?" he asked.

"That? Corn, sweet corn—Golden Bantam. Very good. Tahiti corn no good—too tough. This corn fine."

"Where you get?"

"From America," I replied.

He brought forth the other packets.

"All this Melican seed?"

I told him that it was, and the best that could be bought.

He was silent for a moment. Then he said: "Make fine garden now. No have good seed before. Make plenty big tomato now, plenty squash, plenty corn. Bimeby you see."

Thinking of my three tomatoes, about the size of marbles, I was not sanguine about Sing's being plenty big. However, I expressed the hope that they might be. I brought out my seed catalogue and showed him pictures of the various vegetables. He was much interested and exchanged remarks in Chinese with his father-in-law. Meanwhile one of those heavy local showers common at Tahiti in the rainy season broke with violence. The thunder of water on my tin roof was deafening. Soon the cloud melted into pure sunlight, the last of it descending in a fine mist shot through with rainbow lights. Sing then went to his wagon and returned with three huge watermelons. He made a second excursion, bringing this time a live fowl, a bottle of Dubonnet (vin apéritif), and a basket containing seventeen eggs. All of these articles he placed on my kitchen table.

"Littly plesent, you," he said with a deprecatory gesture. Mrs. Sing and her father then rose, and all three shook my hand, bidding me good-bye with smiles and nods. A moment later they drove off, leaving me astonished at this expression of Chinese friendliness.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the value to me of their generous gift. Tinned beef is a nourishing food, but I had lost all relish for it during the Great War. As for sweet potatoes,

I had eaten so many while knocking about the Pacific on trading schooners that I could hardly endure the sight of them. How welcome, then, was this more palatable food! I planned to have a chicken dinner at once, but on second thought decided not to kill my fowl. Perhaps she would lay, and if I could somehow procure a rooster I might, from that small beginning, raise enough chickens to provide for all my needs. So I staked the hen out in the dooryard, with a string tied to her leg; and, having found several coconuts partly eaten by rats, I broke these open and gave her a good meal. Then, having dined on a six-egg omelet with half a watermelon for dessert, I resumed my work with interest and enthusiasm. All the afternoon the bell of my typewriter rang with the steady persistence of an alarm gong at a railroad crossing, and pages of manuscript fell from my hands like autumn leaves after a heavy frost. By six o'clock that evening I had reached the end of my "Settling Down" story.

I had no time to lose if I were to get it in the north-bound mail. The monthly steamer from New Zealand to San Francisco was due at Papeete on Monday. I decided to go into town to post the manuscript, not being willing to trust the native mail-carrier with so precious a document. A motor-bus ran daily between Papeete and Taravao, a village just beyond my place, but the fare for the round-trip was twenty-four francs. I should need at least ten francs for stamps and expenses in town, so I decided to walk in to Papeete and, if I had enough money left, to ride back. Therefore, having fortified myself with a small glass of Dubonnet and another six-egg omelet, I set out.

It was a beautiful night, dewy and still and fresh, with a full moon rising above the palm trees on the Taravao isthmus. The road wound this way and that around the shoulders of the hills, now skirting the sea, now crossing the mouths of broad valleys where the *hupé*—the night breeze from the interior—blew cool and refreshing. I had glimpses through the trees of lofty precipices festooned with the silvery smoke of waterfalls and, on the left hand, of the lagoon bordered by the barrier reef where great combers, rising to break on the coral, caught the moonlight in

lines of white fire. From native houses along the road came snatches of song, a strange mixture of airs, part French, part Tahitian, to the accompaniment of guitars, accordions, and mouth-organs. On verandahs here and there women were busy with their ironing, sitting crosslegged on the floor with a lamp beside them, and far out on the lagoon the lights of the fishermen were already beginning to appear.

I walked briskly along the moonlit road, feeling at peace with the world and with myself. How pleasant it would be, I thought, really to settle down in this remote tropical paradise, to remain here for the rest of my life. Where could I find kindlier people, or a life more suited to one of my indolent habits? If it were true that a man's wealth may be estimated in terms of the things he can do without, then in that sense I might hope soon to achieve affluence. Material possessions added little to the sum of one's happiness, and I could always earn enough at writing to provide for the simple necessities of life. Whenever the mild-eyed melancholy tropical wolves came sniffing apologetically at my door I could knock off a story of one sort or another; then I could live on the proceeds of the sale of it until it became necessary to write another.

So I mused, proceeding on my way; but at length, toward midnight, when I had covered about half the distance to Papeete, I found myself again thinking of food. The nourishment stored in my second six-egg omelet had already been absorbed and its energy expended. I had a drink of water from a mountain stream and tightened my belt a notch or two.

"I'll have a good breakfast when I get to town," I thought. For three francs I could buy a large portion of chop suey at one of the Chinese restaurants; that would have to suffice until I returned to the country, which I meant to do at once, as soon as I had posted my manuscript.

At a place where the road followed a lonely strip of beach I came to a thatched hut, and sitting near it, by a fire of driftwood, were an old native man and woman. I stopped for a moment to enjoy the beauty of the scene. The stems of the palm trees

were black against the firelight, which flickered over the faces of the old couple and cast huge shadows behind them. They saw me, and the old man called out, "*Haere mai ta maa!* (Come and eat!)" This is merely a friendly greeting, and I replied in the usual way, "*Paia vau* (I'm not hungry)"; but if my empty stomach could have spoken it would have made indignant denial of that statement. But evidently they really meant that I should partake of their midnight supper. They were roasting in the coals what appeared to be shellfish and some sort of native vegetable, and an appetizing fragrance filled the air. "Come!" said the old woman in the native tongue. "Try this, it is very good"—and putting several generous portions in a coconut shell she held it up to me.

Good? I should think it was! The meat of the shellfish was as delicately flavored as that of the finest lobster, and the vegetable had a mealy, nutlike taste. My hosts seemed delighted at my appetite and urged more food upon me. "Eat! Eat!" said the old man. "We have plenty—enough for a dozen," and he pointed to several buckets filled with uncooked food; so I ate with a will.

"What kind of shellfish are these?" I asked. "Did you get them on the reef?"

"Shellfish! These are not shellfish; they're *tupas*."

"What?" I exclaimed. *Tupas* are land crabs, and those I was eating with such relish were members of the pestiferous family, countless in number, which had assisted the ants in ruining my garden. I didn't know they were edible, but the old man told me that Tahitians thought them a great delicacy, which they are, in truth. As for the vegetable, it was not a vegetable at all, but a nut, the fruit of the *mapé*, the Pacific chestnut-tree. These trees flourish at Tahiti. They are found along the banks of streams and in moist or swampy places. There was a grove of them on my place, and the ground beneath was littered with nuts that I had never bothered to examine, not knowing that they were of value. I was appalled at thought of the time and effort I had wasted trying to make a garden, when all the while

there was an inexhaustible food-supply at hand, to be enjoyed without labor, to be had for the mere taking. But no; the taking of land crabs could not be such a simple matter. I remembered the wariness of those which infested my garden plot. They did all their damage in my absence. The moment they saw me coming they scurried to their holes and, if I made so much as a move in their direction, dodged down to safety. I had once caught one by digging him out, but that cost me two hours of hard work.

I asked the old man how he caught them and he showed me a method so simple and reasonable that I wondered I had not thought of it. He had a fishpole and line, but instead of a hook at the end of the line he tied there a bunch of green leaves from the hibiscus tree. These leaves and the blossoms of the hibiscus are the principal food of land crabs. We went a little way from the hut to a spot in full moonlight where there were many crab-holes. "Now stand very still," he said. In a moment the crabs, which had scurried away at our approach, came warily up again. He then cast his bait very much as one does in fly-fishing. Immediately several crabs came sidling toward it. They fastened their nippers in the leaves, each of them trying to drag the bundle to his hole. The old man then gave a deft jerk to the line, and the crabs, not being able to disengage their nippers quickly enough, were dragged to his feet. He pounced upon them and threw them into the bucket with the others. I then tried my hand, with such success that I was tempted to forego my journey to town. I wanted to go home at once and begin fishing in my garden, but more prudent counsels prevailed. One's appetite for food so plentiful and so easily procured might become jaded in time; furthermore, I should need a certain amount of money for clothing, shaving materials, tobacco, and so forth. Therefore, having bade farewell to my kindly hosts, I proceeded on my way and reached Papeete at dawn, just as the steamer that was to carry my manuscript to America was entering the harbor. Stamps for the precious parcel cost three francs. I then breathed over it a silent prayer and slipped it into the letter-chute.

Papeete is a colorful town, particularly in the early morning when the inhabitants are going to and from the market. Everyone is in the streets then, and the French and Chinese restaurants are filled with people exchanging gossip over their morning coffee. I had an excellent breakfast at a cost of four francs, and then strolled here and there doubly enjoying the gayety of the scene after my long sojourn in the country. I was walking along the Quai de Commerce looking at the shipping when someone touched my shoulder. It was a bald fat little Chinaman who had evidently been running after me, for he was out of breath and could not speak for a moment. Then he began talking in Chinese-Tahitian, a sort of *bêche-de-mer* that I don't understand. I shook my head. He renewed his efforts, speaking very earnestly and rapidly, and presently I caught the name "Hop Sing."

"Hop Sing?" I said.

"*É*! *É*! (Yes! Yes!)" he replied, and of a sudden he found some English words.

"You know Hop Sing? Hop Sing flen, you?"

"Yes," I said. "I know him. Hop Sing live close me, Papeari."

Papeari is the name of the district where I was living.

The Chinaman's face glowed with pleasure.

"*Maitai! Maitai!* (Good! Good!) Hop Sing send me letta. I know name, you. You give seed; put in gloun, make garden. *Maitai! Maitai!* Hop Sing glad. Me glad. Hop Sing bruddalaw me."

"What name you?" I asked.

"Lee Fat. Keep store over there," and he pointed down the street. "When you go back Papeari?"

"Go this morning on motor-bus."

"Goo-bye," the Chinaman said, and rushed away as though he had not a moment to lose. I was surprised at the abrupt leave-taking and stood looking after him, hardly knowing what to make of the encounter, touched at thought of this odd little man chasing me down the street to thank me for the trifling favor I had done his brother-in-law.

I sat on a bench near the post office to wait for the motor-bus. "The Beach-combers' Bench" it was called, for it was usually occupied on steamer day by waifs and strays from all parts of the world, men who sat there waiting for the distribution of the monthly mail, always expecting letters containing money and nearly always disappointed. "I'm in the same boat now," I thought. "Three months hence I'll be sitting here nursing the same forlorn hope." It was possible, of course, that my manuscript would sell at once, but, remembering past experiences, I knew it would be foolish to count on it. Well, I still had twenty-one francs, and I should have nine left after paying my bus fare. Certainly I should not starve, with land crabs and mapé nuts to eat, and meanwhile I should work at the journalistic trade as never before, sending manuscripts north by every steamer as long as I had money for postage. Having made this resolve, I put my worries aside.

It was nearly midday when I arrived at Papeari. While I was paying my fare to the driver, the boy who attended to the distribution of parcels put a box down beside me.

"You've made a mistake," I said. "That isn't mine."

"Yes it is," he replied.

"No, no. I didn't have a box and I've ordered nothing from town."

He insisted, however, that it was mine. A Chinaman had brought it just before the bus left the market, he said, and had paid for its carriage to my place. I still thought there was some mistake, but upon prying off the lid I found a card with "Lee Fat, No. 118" printed on it. (Every Chinaman at Tahiti has a number. This is for some governmental purpose; to keep track of them, perhaps.) Under the name was written, in pencil, "Mr. Hall, for you." The parcel contained the following articles: one two-pound box of New Zealand chocolates, a large paper bag of lichi nuts, one quart of champagne (Louis Roederer), and a beautiful lacquered box with a gold dragon on the lid. In this box were two silk handkerchiefs and a silk pyjama-suit.

I was tempted to open the champagne at once, that I might drink long life and abundant health to Hop Sing and his brother-in-law, Lee Fat, No. 118; but I had no ice, and I knew that I could not drink, alone, a quart of champagne without having a headache the following day. So I tied a string to the bottle and lowered it into the cistern to keep cool. Then I went out to attend to my chicken.

She was gone. The string was still tied to the stake, but she had worked her leg out of the noose and vanished. After a long search I found her under the back steps. I reached in, very cautiously, to grasp her. She pecked at my hand and, as I drew her forth, gave utterance to the indignant squawks common to hens when they are sitting. Surely enough, she had laid an egg and was sitting on it; evidently she had been ready to sit when Hop Sing brought her to me. The egg under her was unfertilized, of course, so I took that out. Then I made her a nest of excelsior out of Lee Fat's box, and placed in it the five eggs remaining of Hop Sing's gift. The hen settled down on them with contented cluckings and, when comfortable, closed her eyes as much as to say, "Now then, all I ask is to be fed from time to time, and twenty-one days hence we shall see what we shall see."

It seems to me now that the definite upward trend in the graph of my fortunes began that afternoon when I started land-crab fishing. The results not only flattered my vanity—sadly in need of flattery—but gave me renewed confidence. "At last," I thought, "I am a success at something." I could not eat a tenth of the crabs I had caught, so I made a pen of stakes set closely together and deeply into the ground, and turned the surplus loose inside it. They immediately dug new holes for themselves, but this did not disturb me, for I knew I could easily catch them again. I fished all over my two-acre estate with such success that I had to enlarge the pen several times, and even then, and despite the fact that some of the crabs dug their way out, there were so many inside that the ground was honey-combed with their burrows. It occurred to me that by feeding

them regularly on hibiscus leaves and blossoms I might add to their size and increase the delicacy of their flavor. The experiment was highly successful. The crabs thrived upon the regular and abundant food and I thrived upon them. At the time of Hop Sing's visit, what through worry and an uncongenial diet, I was very thin, but within six weeks I had gained fourteen pounds.

Meanwhile, upon the appointed day, my hen stepped out of her nest, followed by five bits of animated fluff. I was quite as proud of them as she was, and doubtless took more credit to myself on that occasion than the facts warranted. I fed both the hen and her brood on a mixture of roasted land crabs and mapé nuts, and never have I seen chickens grow so rapidly.

It may seem incredible that my bottle of champagne should have remained unbroached during this time, but such is the case. In my interest in crab and chicken farming I had quite forgotten it; but one day, when my landlord was gathering coconuts in a near-by grove, I asked him to share it with me. He was more than willing, and at the first glass his habitually reserved attitude toward me altered at once. I then learned the reason for this attitude. He told me that his last tenant, an Australian, had not only eaten bananas and coconuts to which he had no right, but had gone away without paying his rent. We drank confusion to this scurvy tenant wherever he might be. Several of my landlord's children had accompanied him to the house, and I shared with them the box of New Zealand chocolates. It was a merry little party, and after much pleasant talk my landlord left me with repeated expressions of good will. The following morning I found on my back verandah a large bunch of bananas and a gunny sack filled with oranges and mangoes, and thereafter I was never without these delicious fruits, gifts from my landlord and his family. Not infrequently Mata, his wife, would send me, by one of the children, baked fish, breadfruit, and mountain plantain wrapped in green leaves, fresh from her native oven. I was overwhelmed with benefits and remembered with deep gratitude that I owed them all to Hop Sing.

His garden was flourishing; all of the seeds I had given him had sprouted and gave promise of a rich harvest under his patient, ceaseless care. He was always at work, and so too was Mrs. Sing, despite the demands on her time made by three small children. Sometimes of a late afternoon I walked down to their place, and usually found Mrs. Sing in a shed back of the house, where she sorted and cleaned bunches of lettuce and string beans for the market. All of her members were busy at once. She rocked the smallest baby, which hung in a little cradle from a rafter, by means of a cord attached to her foot. Every now and then she would pull another cord which hung just above her head, and this one ran, by a system of pulleys, to the garden, where there was a sort of jumping-jack scarecrow to frighten away the mynah birds; and meanwhile the fresh vegetables got themselves cleaned and deftly packed in little baskets. Sing was a baker as well as a gardener, and four times per week, after his long day's toil, he made the rounds of the district selling crisp loaves and pineapple tarts to the native population. Invariably, during these excursions, he left something at my gate, either a tart or a loaf of bread or a basket of vegetables, and to my great relief nothing I could do or say served to dry up his fountain of gratitude for my wretched little gift of seed.

Under these circumstances the weeks passed pleasantly and quickly that steamer day—the third since the posting of my manuscript—was at hand before I realized it. I walked into town once more and waited on the familiar bench for the distribution of the mail. I waited all through the afternoon until everyone in Papeete and its environs had called for their letters. I waited until the sun was sinking behind the mountains of Moorea and the post office was about to close. Then, summoning all my resolution, I mounted the steps and walked toward the delivery window, saying inwardly, "It's useless to ask; I'm quite certain to be disappointed." The girl who presided there went hastily through a small heap of letters.

"No, there's nothing for you," she said, smiling pleasantly.

I made a ghastly attempt to smile in return and was going

toward the door when she called, "Oh! Just a moment! What name did you say?"

I repeated it, enunciating the words with the utmost care.

"Yes, there's one letter," she said. "Fifty centimes postage due."

Having paid this, I had left only a twenty-five-centime piece, the smallest coin in use in French Oceania. But little that mattered. The letter contained a gracious note accepting my manuscript, and a cheque for five hundred dollars!

To those living luxurious lives in the high latitudes five hundred dollars may seem a trifling sum, but to me it was a fortune. With the half of it I could pay the rental for my house and grounds for a period of nearly seven years, and, provided I lived as modestly in the future as I had in the immediate past, the two hundred and fifty remaining would suffice for other expenses for a much longer time. But now, with bright vistas of ease and plenty and peace of mind opening out before me, I found myself perversely considering the possibility of leaving Tahiti. The north-bound steamer to San Francisco was expected in three days' time, and I fell to considering the varied experience I might now have by virtue of movement and my five hundred dollars. Remembering my past fortunes as a journalist, I knew that it was the part of wisdom to stay here where living was, for the first time, within my means; and yet, if I did not go now, I might never again have enough money for a steamship ticket. I walked the streets long after everyone else was in bed, in an agony of indecision, and at last, as the clock in the cathedral was striking two, the decision was made.

Hop Sing was in town on the day of my departure. He had driven to market with garden produce, and both he and Lee Fat came to see me off. Fat insisted on my accepting a pair of Russian-leather bedroom-slippers and a Chinese fan of blue silk embroidered with gold butterflies. Sing's parting gift was a basket of tomatoes as large as oranges, and a dozen ears of sweet corn, Golden Bantam—the first fruits from the seeds I had given him. They smiled good-byes as the steamer backed away

from the wharf; then I went at once to my cabin, in order that departure from that most beautiful of islands might be a little less poignant. While I was unpacking my bag the cabin steward looked in.

"You've been assigned to the doctor's table, sir," he said. "It's a table for four, but this trip there's only one other gentleman there besides the doctor."

"All right," I replied. "And by the way, will you please have this corn prepared and served at luncheon? Take a couple of ears for yourself if you care to."

"Thank you, sir. I guess the other gentleman at your table will be glad to see this. He ain't half complained about the food, and to tell you the truth, it's not what it might be."

The doctor did not come down for luncheon. I had just seated myself when the other passenger at his table came in. He was a tall, spare man with a drooping white moustache and a bilious complexion. He was dressed in a baggy linen coat, knickerbockers, and low white shoes. He sat down without even a nod in my direction and, adjusting a pair of nose-glasses, picked up the menu card, puffing out his cheeks as he examined it, letting the air escape slowly through his lips. He struck me as being a man hard to please in the matter of food, no matter how good it might be. He was partaking of a fish course of creamed tinned salmon when the steward brought in a platter with ten splendid ears of Golden Bantam corn steaming on it. He gazed at it in astonishment.

"Take this away," he said to the steward, pushing the dish of salmon to one side, "and bring me a plate."

Never have I seen a man give himself up to the enjoyment of food with such purely physical abandon. One would have thought he had not eaten for days. When he had finished his third ear he said, "Steward, where does this corn come from? It's not on the card."

"No, sir, it's not on the regular bill. It's a gift to the table from the gentleman sitting opposite you."

He gave me a quick glance as though he had just then become aware of my presence.

"Consider yourself thanked, sir," he said brusquely.

I nodded.

"Is this corn of your own growing?"

"Well, yes, in a sense," I replied.

He ploughed a hasty furrow along his fourth ear before speaking again. Then he said, "What do you mean by 'in a sense?' You either raised it or you didn't, I should think."

He had a waspish, peppery way of speaking, as though he had been long accustomed to asking whomever whatever he liked with the certainty of a deferential reply. In view of the fact that he was eating my—or rather Hop Sing's—corn, I felt that he might have made an effort at least to be gracious. Therefore I merely said, as coldly as possible, "Oh, you'd have to live at Tahiti to understand that." Having finished my luncheon, I rose, bowed slightly, and left him there, still eating corn.

Half an hour later I was standing at the rail, aft, watching the peak of Orofena, the highest mountain at Tahiti, disappearing below the horizon. A hand was laid on my arm, and turning I found my luncheon companion.

"Well, young man," he said, "one would say you were thinking of jumping overboard."

"I *have* been thinking of it," I replied, "but it's too far to swim back now."

"You like Tahiti as much as that? Well, I don't wonder. An island where they grow such delicious corn must be a good place to live. I ate six of those ears—finished the lot, in fact."

"I'm glad you enjoyed it," I replied.

"See here! You mustn't mind my manner. I've got dyspepsia, and a wayward liver and an enlarged spleen—Lord knows what all else the matter with me. Gives me a sort of jaundiced outlook on life. But I want you to know that I'm grateful. Sweet corn is one of the few things I can eat without suffering afterward. Now then, tell me something about your island. I didn't go ashore. Useless trying to see a place in six hours. It's only an aggravation."

I scarcely know how it came about, but within a few minutes I was talking as freely as to an old friend. I told him of the beauty of the islands, of the changing life, of the mingling races, of the strange outcroppings of savagery through the shale of what in those parts is called civilization. Presently I cut off short, thinking he might be bored.

"Not at all," he said. "Well, you've had an interesting time, evidently, and you seem to have made good use of your eyes and ears. Too bad you're not a journalist. I don't suppose you've ever tried your hand at writing?"

"Yes, occasionally," I replied. "In fact, journalism is my trade, if I may be said to have a trade."

"Got any of your stuff with you?"

"A few sketches."

"Do you mind letting me see them?"

"Not at all," I said; and so, at his suggestion, I brought him a small sheaf of things, six slight papers on various subjects, each of them about two thousand words in length. He settled himself in his deck-chair and adjusted his glasses.

"Come back in an hour's time," he said, "and I'll tell you what I think of them."

He thought two of them worthless, and curiously enough they were the ones I thought best.

"But these four are not bad. What do you want for them?"

"Do you mean you would like to buy them?"

"Yes, of course. But I forgot to tell you—I'm manager of a newspaper syndicate in America. We can use these sketches. Tropical-island stuff is always popular. It's all bosh about the waning of interest in the South Seas. It never wanes and never will as long as life is what it is in America. Well, what do you want for them?"

"Oh, I don't know," I said. I was about to add, "Would one hundred dollars be too much?"—meaning one hundred for the four—when he interrupted me.

"Give you a hundred and fifty each for them. Is that satisfactory?"

I admitted that it was—quite satisfactory.

Adam—"Our General Ancestor," as Milton calls him—was undoubtedly the first husbandman, and a highly successful one during the early part of his career. But, even under the exceptionally favorable conditions prevailing in the Garden of Eden before The Fall, I doubt whether he ever reaped a richer or more varied harvest than I did in my garden at Tahiti. And it all came from a dollar's worth of seed.

WILLIAM McFEE

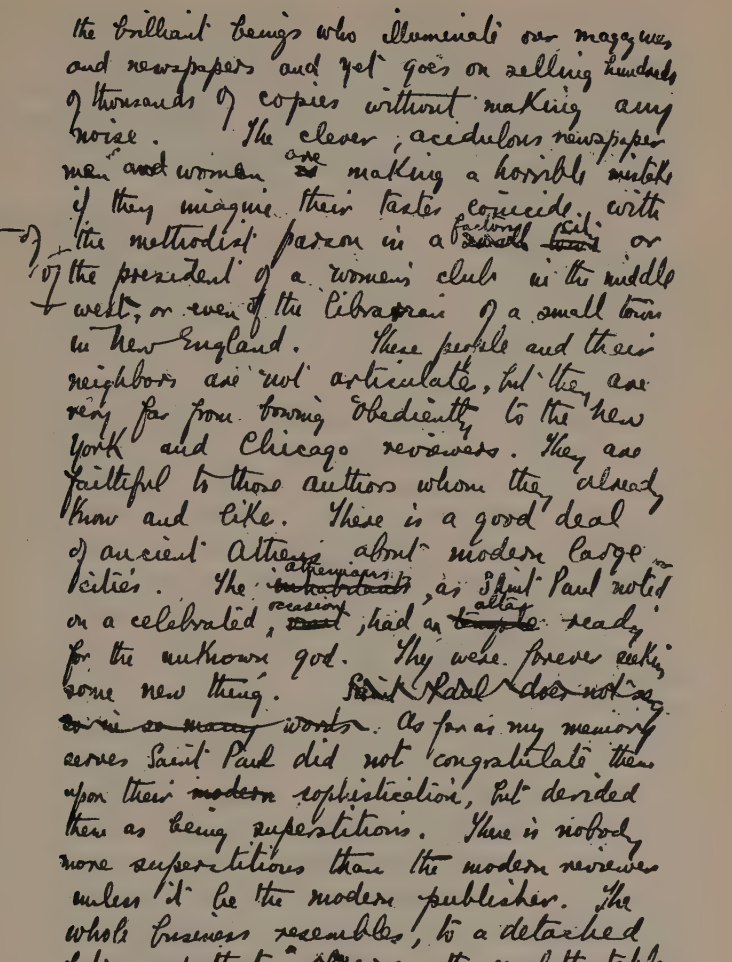
Essayist, short-story writer, novelist

Man-of-letters and engineer is Mr. McFee—excellent man-of-letters, excellent engineer. In the latter capacity, he has created most of his books in his cabin. They have the tang of the sea, but that sense of reality is not their only virtue. If Mr. McFee, "romantic realist," writes "fiction," it is, in truth, life itself touched by the hand of the artist. If he writes critical essays, he produces something of critical and literary importance. If he writes the familiar essay, he delights the reader with something more than mere entertainment. Read his "Letter in Reply to a Young Gentleman of Yale University" and learn a little bit of the way in which he does it, though the real secret lies, of course, in his own personality. Or read the letter for the pure delight of reading a good piece of literature.

His *An Ocean Tramp* and his *Casuals of the Sea* are particularly recommended to the student as excellent examples of his ability as a writer of the sea.

Mr. McFee has been compared to Conrad and Zola and a dozen other realists, but in spite of our fondness for critical comparisons, Mr. McFee is himself. He is romanticist and realist; and, among other things, he has the wit that Englishmen are traditionally supposed not to have! He has not only written in his cabin; he has read there, having always carried a varied and changing library with him. He has read, written and observed wherever he has been.

That he would have gone to sea was inevitable, since his father and grandfather were English sea captains before him; and perhaps, in a sense, he did not *go* to sea, since he was born there and merely went back to it after he had grown up and received an education. He lives now in Connecticut, leaving there now and then for an ocean trip.



Facsimile of a page of manuscript from "First Aid to Critics," by William McFee, published in *Book Chat*.

"I find that in the general way, I write straight ahead. That is, I wait and loaf until I have the idea clear in my mind, and then there is very little re-writing unless the whole draft of the story is changed. This is a matter of temperament. Some men like to tease a mss. into shape without re-writing. I like a fresh page."

—William McFee.

A LETTER IN REPLY TO A YOUNG GENTLEMAN OF YALE UNIVERSITY [1]

My Dear Sir:

I do not remember any letter among the many I have received from Americans which has given me so much pleasure as yours, or which has led me to scrutinize so narrowly the understructure of the career of authorship. I like your letter, not only because you reveal the engaging candour that seems to me to be in the New Haven air, not only because your calligraphy is so exquisitely lucid and attractive to a jaded eye, but because you are one of a numerous company of young Americans who have honoured me with their letters and who have all endeared themselves to my memory by a singularly charming and slightly antique style of writing. And it is of that I would speak at first.

I am not unmindful that most of you come from New England, though several who are tinged with this 18-century turn of phrase and attitude of mind hail from distant colleges. It is my desire to congratulate you upon preserving, in a syncopating era of the world, those decencies of word and thought which, in my opinion, are a not unpleasant feature of civilization.

It will be difficult, of course, for me to extract from your letter adequate examples of what I mean without quoting some of those graceful compliments that you have so ingeniously embedded in the text. But I can attempt it.

"How, my dear sir," you say, "did you begin to write? I have read a partial account in one of your books and have picked up strands here and there from time to time. Did you 'write and burn,' as Joseph Conrad advised all undergraduates here a few days ago? And again—you see I am a human question

[1] From *Swallowing the Anchor*. Copyright 1923 by William McFee and reprinted by permission of Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., Publishers.

mark—do you think travel necessary to a good writer? Are newspapers advisable as a means of sharpening style? I mean, of course, writing for them—no one would read them for literary merit. You see I am seriously considering the literary life—not really considering it because I can't possibly keep out of it, *i.e.*, when desire and not ability is the criterion—and have had considerable difficulty in matters to write about. Life, I suppose, is teeming all around me, and yet my experience is confined to a few adolescent amours. . . . Do you think it necessary to be old to write a novel?"

Here, I think, we have the mainspring and alarm of your interrogative epistle. At all events, it was this paragraph that gave me most reason for taking a retrospect of the road over which I have been travelling for twenty-five years.

It is, of course, quite unnecessary for you, as a young undergraduate, to apologize for such questions as being possibly "impertinent." That is very polite on your part, but permit me to waive it as unnecessary. Such questions are in the highest degree pertinent. Upon what rational plea can an author resent them? He is an artist, he works for the public pleasure and edification, and by these tokens the youth of the land who desire to be instructed in the art have every right to ask his counsel. And so we come to your first question—how does one begin to write?

I assume, young sir, that you have more than once turned away from those empty and windy nostrums that are at times sent floating about the literary causeways by folk who are—to put it humanely—not very scrupulous in their thinking. As, for instance, that the way to learn to write is to write. Or that writing, like everything else, is a trade. You know the sort of thing. Even the perfectly sound and valuable advice that you quote—to "write and burn"—is open to the criticism that it reverberates in young hearts like the clang of a heavy door closing, rather than the cheerful rattle of an opening casement.

I can offer you none of these formidable and epigrammatic instruments for penetrating the veils that conceal the mysteries

of our art. All I can do is to light a candle and lead the way back along the corridors of memory to the magic period when, like you, I was afflicted with the passion for writing and yet had, as you phrase it so felicitously, "considerable difficulty in matters to write about."

And who has not? My first word is entirely of encouragement. I think myself it is a wise provision of nature that when we are young we lack power. Life, you suppose, is teeming all around you and yet your experience is confined to a few adolescent amours. Well, the other amours will come along in due course, and although I am not one of those who hold that art is merely a manifestation of sex, falling in love is undoubtedly a factor in the problem. But in the beginning I imagine that writing, or music, or the plastic arts, come to us unconsciously, growing out of the universal instinct for imitation.

So I recall it, rather ruefully, I may tell you. Of course, you may be informed by the modern school of psychology that I am wrong, that my memories are suspect, and that it is all a question of glands. Perhaps it is. But to me it is a picture of a small boy reading and reading and reading, much of it reading aloud to a shrewd and competent mother, and then the instinctive act of taking a pen and imitating the phrases and emotions for himself.

We can get a hint of the mechanism of literary inception, I think, from the fact that a boy—or a girl—tends to grandiose themes—the invention of improbable regions and gigantic beings, of horrors and sheeted phantoms. It is my own theory that our imaginations, like our bodies, pass rapidly through the whole gamut of evolutionary phases during adolescence. There is a period at the threshold of the introspective life when the mind is scarcely differentiated from sensation, and the things imagined are as crude as the sagas. It is these early spiritual contortions and monstrous inventions of which the fairy stories are made, which give them their power over every generation.

The next stage, however, is much more interesting to you and to me, since it takes place in the world of living men. You

ask how one begins to write. Well, there are two sources of inspiration, and it is because one or other of them is forgotten in the excitement of the controversy that one derives so little profit from the precepts of eminent artists. For if dreams are the indispensable basis of the act of creation, our life in this world is the mould into which most of us must run our thoughts. I do not deny that there are masters of pure fantasy, poets of the calibre of Francis Thompson and William Butler Yeats, who move with singular ease and beauty among legends of ancient days, prose writers like De Quincey and William Blake, who float clear of our earthly levels and entrance our souls, and who, as Goethe says in Faust, "beckon to far-off shores with smiles from other skies."

But you and I had better keep our feet on the ground yet awhile, I think, and since the problem is the genesis of authorship, we may describe it as the imitative instinct acting upon the intimate external world of action.

And here it is proper to put in a plea for the gentlemen who are lying in wait for you, and who will demand with wistful doggedness an abundance of that same action. One of the most difficult things in the world, to my mind, is to sit down and tell a child an impromptu story. And why? Well, because the child wants us to tell it what happened. We have to invent action. The story a child makes up for itself is all action. There was once a little girl and she was crying because she had been invited to a lovely ball and her mother said she couldn't go because she was naughty. And while she was crying, suddenly a little old woman came up the garden path, a little old woman dressed in a blue cloak and with a basket on her arm full of—— and so on. That is the way a child makes up a story, and with very little modification that is what you will have to do to pacify those estimable and warm-hearted editors who will insist upon something happening in your stories. The principle behind this apparently despotic demand is an eternal one. It is nothing less than the practical application of the theory that writing is an art. I am aware that modern critical jargon tends to confuse

this issue and proclaims that since life is apparently formless and incomprehensible, a novel should develop along those lines. But I would here quote Goethe again, and remark in passing that the more you read that remarkable genius the better. In *Wilhelm Meister*, he observes drily that "art is called art because it is not nature," and I suggest you never forget it.

The editor, then, who insists upon action in the story, who wants you, as a modern critic naïvely puts it, to begin at the beginning and end at the end, to have it clear in your mind before you begin to tell it, is merely requiring you to be an artist. The notion that a story leaps into existence, like Minerva springing full armed from the head of Jove, is attractive but not founded upon experience. I am inclined myself to accept the personal narratives of inspired authors with a grain of salt. You may "get an idea," as they say, and write it at white heat in a few hours. But I very much doubt whether it will be worth much after you have written it. This illusion of rapid creation is fostered by the fact that conceptions do actually come to one in a flash and at the most unexpected moments. But I would point out that the artist's mind, in these cases, is continuously preoccupied with his theme: his story, as I am fond of saying, is cooking over a slow fire, day after day, week after week, perhaps for years, before he experienced these authentic and sudden revelations of the minor syntheses. You will discover infinitely more comfort and nourishment in my own favourite theory of growth. Art is fundamentally a product of meditation. We are apt to lose sight of this point because all the machinery of modern publishing, even the vocabulary of literary processes, tends to conceal the gradual inception, the years of silent gestation, the travail of soul, that precede all genuine achievements in the imaginative sphere. It flatters our vanity to have people think we dashed it off. We are anxious to avoid any suspicion of being irresponsible loafers, and so we sit at our desks every day at certain hours, exactly as though we were engaged in merchandising. Now, industry is as important in authorship as in any other department of life, but

it cannot be regulated quite so deftly as that. Nevertheless, I am not about to deliver any vapourings concerning inspiration. My idea, derived from a rather strenuous pursuit of hard manual labour and executive responsibility far removed from writing, is that success even in bench work, say, is very much a matter of inspiration. Else, how can one account for those days when a job is done by magic, when work moves forward in oiled grooves, and you reflect with amazement at the facility of your achievement? The artisan is as much the victim of temperament and inspiration as the artist, but the convention is that only the latter can claim it, and there I think the convention is wrong.

Your question, however, "did you 'write and burn,'" can be answered boldly and without any loss of honour. It is the lot of mankind to "write and burn," but I am unable to recall any formal pyre. There appears to be a ritual in these matters. The sight of the burning pages vanishing up the chimney seems to exercise a soothing and propitiatory influence upon the spirit that provides over such functions. I am unable to attribute any peculiar significance to the actual incineration of one's 'prentice work, though I confess to standing by the rail at night and dropping it overboard. The fact is, an apprentice, whether to authorship or cabinet-making or black-smithing, makes many "wasters" that have to be destroyed, or at least stowed away out of sight. To make it a romantic and semi-religious gesture is to my mind a foolish thing to do. There need be no regret if you derived pleasure from the writing and profit from the disillusion that followed.

The next interrogation, whether travel is "necessary to a good writer," is full of danger for one who has been about the world more or less and whose work bears the mark of so many alien impressions. The cobbler believes there is nothing like leather. But candour demands that a fair judgment be delivered, and it must be confessed that while travel is desirable to afford a wide culture and a trained eye, it is by no means essential to the creation of great art. Indeed, I am able to make an excel-

lent case for the writer who stays right in his home town. I can recall to your memory Robert Burns, for example, Mrs. Gaskell, and Thomas Hardy. Perhaps Hardy is of all modern masters of prose the best example of the artist who has achieved his greatest triumphs at his own door. But I need not labour this point. You will be able to think of many others, like Flaubert and Maupassant in Rouen, George W. Cable in New Orleans, Arthur Machen in his garret in London, who have gone to neither China nor Peru. There is no greater fallacy than that romance lies on the other side of the world. And just as he who is a failure in business at home may imagine success beyond the ranges, so the artist who sees nothing in his native vale may dream of masterpieces conceived in the shadow of the Andes. Each is the victim of an illusion. They seek neither wealth nor fame, but the satisfaction of that strange migratory instinct—

> For to admire an' for to see,
> For to be'old this world so wide—
> It never done no good to me,
> But I can't drop it if I tried.

Be very sure indeed it is not that, rather than art, which propels you from port to port.

It is with the next query, as to the use of newspapers, that I must offer, in all sincerity and honest regard, an adverse criticism. Are they "advisable as a means of sharpening style," you ask, adding, rather to my annoyance, "I mean, of course, writing for them—no one would read them for literary merit." Now, I am unable to understand how writing for a newspaper can be good for a style if the newspaper has no literary merit. On the contrary, I am happy to inform you that I am a voracious reader of newspapers, of magazines, of house organs, and of advertisements. I am of the opinion that never was newspaper writing of so high a standard as at the present moment, and that your average morning or evening journal in America far transcends anything to be found elsewhere. With a few exceptions, such as, for example, an essay on the chemical nature of

Water Soluble B., or a libelous attack upon an honoured citizen, the metropolitan dailies will print and pay for articles upon any subject under the sun. The curiosity and enthusiasm of the editors are insatiable, and the better you write the better they will like it. So vast and so heterogeneous is the available market that no ready writer need be idle or impoverished.

For the forming of taste, however, there is something to be said for moderation in reading the papers. The reason is obvious. Children should be sparingly supplied with rich food. They should have an abundance of staples. Here we might allude to a question I have frequently seen in the correspondence columns of magazines devoted to "red-blooded stories for he-men," as they are sometimes called. These correspondents are usually the husky students of some Western university and they demand ruthlessly why their courses at college contain so much dry stuff about old has-beens like Chaucer and Spenser, Shakespeare and Wordsworth. Why, they ask, can they not take a course in modern authors? And here they mention the writers who appeal to them most strongly in their favourite magazine. I suspect the professors whom you disparage so disdainfully in your letter would ignore such suggestions. I think it more to the purpose, not being a professor, to answer the question. The reason why we must acquire a knowledge of those old "has-beens" (as one indignant Westerner calls them) is that nothing can be done in any profession without a standard. The whole business of education beyond the elements is designed, not to fill the brains with facts as a bin is filled with beans, but to fashion in the mind an instrument by which a work of art or literature can be gauged. Only by means of this gauging, this trained instinct for fineness, can we attain to the permanent enjoyments of life. It is, in a measure, discipline and drill. The "wild ass of the desert" doubtless enjoys life in his own way, but our civilization and culture are built up on the theory that "the acquired memories of the artist," as La Farge phrased it, are of value, and the only way to acquire memories is to read what has been done.

The practice, however, of deliberately imitating certain models, "playing the sedulous ape," as R. L. S. called it, I don't regard with any enthusiasm. I am aware Stevenson did it himself, and Walter Pater devoted long periods to translating from foreign tongues into the English of some admired master. Whether they profited by this course it is not possible to declare. In a general way the young writer imitates in spite of himself, and unconsciously. He will have his "periods." He will drink deep of Ruskin or Carlyle, Emerson or Keats, and industriously bay the moon in these various styles, happily oblivious that the style is only the mark of the character and not to be copied. The use of these early exercises is to give suppleness of movement. It was a rule when I was taught cricket that the business of playing the ball, the stance, the swing, the muscular effort of the stroke, had to be practised until, when at the wicket, the whole operation took place with the precision of instinct. It had to be relegated to the subconscious mind, as in operating an automobile at high speed, let us say. And one of the marks of a good writer, to my mind, is that he gets his results in this way. The phrase, the paragraph, the chapter, grow in his mind in orderly and largely unconscious sequence, not because he has had an inspiration from on high, but because he has been practising the swing until it has become second nature.

Here I might make a brief plea for the paragraph in particular. It fell to my lot, not long since, to read a book of considerable recent fame. The energy and personal magnetism of the author were incontestable. His life, which he elected to recount in the form of fiction, was a miracle of tempestuous and emotional uproar. One of the prevailing conceits of his character was that he was above all things an artist. And yet the book was one of the most difficult I have ever read, because the author had not the remotest conception of balance and rhythm. The book had divisions neither of chapter nor paragraph. Everything was hurled down upon the paper pell-mell and spattered with rows of the little dots which Mr. H. G. Wells used so deftly in some of his books, and which his imitators abuse so cruelly.

The result was a constant strain upon the nerves. The mind was kept at full stretch so long that attention sagged and was finally severed. The material was there, piled up and chaotic, but the artist was unaware that he had not finished his job. Doubtless he would seek justification in the trend of modern literature, which seems to regard with impatience the minor but admirable task of fashioning the *mot juste*, the pregnant phrase, and welding them into the cadence of the paragraph.

"Do you think it necessary to be old to write a novel?" you ask, and I am aware of the pathos in that question. I am aware of it all the more poignantly because I see on my desk, as I write, the manuscript of a novel written by a young lady of seventeen. It is an excellent story of its kind and she is becomingly modest about her achievement. Neither she nor I would admit that any special virtue attaches to precocity. The word "novel" covers so many kinds of composition, we are entitled to persevere until extreme old age.

I would venture, with your permission, to advance a proposition which is the fruit of experience, that in the beginning equipment is of more importance than ephemeral acceptance for publication. There is nothing in life or in art that is unimportant to the novelist. All is grist that comes to his mill. His culture cannot be too wide, or his reading too various. Sooner or later the apparently sterile stuff will be of service, will fructify and grow. He must have, to quote La Farge again, an abundance of "acquired memories." He is, more than most of us care to admit, very like the fabricator of a mosaic. The fingers of his mind are for ever reaching back into the heaps of coloured fragments in the storerooms, trying to make them fit his design, discovering a piece of unusual shape or tint and modifying the design to bring it in. And then, when it is all in, in the rough, it must be cemented, and scoured, and smoothed, and polished.

Am I depressing? Do I present to your youthful imagination a series of perilous ascents to the hills of fair renown? That is not my design, at all events. I am not unmindful of the charming confidence you have reposed in my omniscience, and I con-

sider it an honourable charge to give the best counsel in my power. "There is no Excellent Beauty that hath not some Strangeness in the Proportion" is an epigram I commend to your careful attention. We shall assume that you are sufficiently intelligent to understand what Lord Bacon meant when he said it. And in turning over in my mind that part of your letter in which you say you are so seriously considering the literary life that you are unable to keep out of it, it occurs to me to repeat what I have already said in some place, that the best training for literature is to take up something else. And by that I mean you will become more easily a thinker, which is indispensable to the artist, if you get your store of "acquired memories" by way of a settled and secular calling. Perhaps the further removed from literature the better, as Keats was a druggist, you will remember, and Bunyan a tinker. So you will secure for yourself a means of living and a long apprenticeship.

And now, as I look back over the pages I have written and the years I have lived, I am not sure I have given you the key, after all! I am not confident, I fear, that I know just what art is or how it can be defined. For that is your need. If we could only find a nice, concise, and noncorroding definition, how happy we should be! I am reminded by that of one I read many years ago, incongruous enough in its origin, for George Gissing could, by no stretch of word meanings, be said to have had a great deal of joy. But in that wonderful little book he wrote toward the end, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, a book that was like the last sudden roseate glow in a sombre western sky after a stormy day, he gives us his creed, that art is the expression of the joy in life.

I offer it to you with reservations. It has many votaries and will serve you for a few years. But at the back of my mind I think the truth is more subtle than Gissing suspected, fine artist that he was. For it may be doubted if a human being saturated with the joy of life, a perfectly happy person, could create anything at all. Indeed, Gissing's own life affords evidence that one of the most potent incentives to the creation of

works of art is grief, sorrow. I do not mean that we should be for ever composing lamentations, but that grief is a lens of extraordinary power through which we can behold the workings of our own hearts.

Perhaps you now see the point toward which I have been working—that your book or your poem, if it is to have any appeal at all, must be a product of your character. All the long weary road you are about to travel, the slow accretion of "acquired memories," the perception of analogies and the comprehension of the mechanism of metaphor are but the preliminary skirmishes in the great business of becoming a writer. And when you have learned your trade as apprentice and improver, when you have grown inured to the singular fact that no measure of acceptance can ever destroy the anxiety in your heart because your work is not better, then perhaps you may begin cautiously to regard yourself as an artist. And the test is this—that in darkness and trouble, when the amenities of life are withdrawn, when love and friendship are uncertain, you can turn to your writing and find therein an indestructible consolation.

WILLIAM BEEBE

Nature writer, essayist

Mr. Beebe's experiences as a famous naturalist have taken him to all parts of the world, with adventures in the jungle and under the sea. As a scientist, he has contributed valuable information particularly to ornithology and to man's knowledge of deep sea life. He has held numerous positions of responsibility and honor in the scientific world and is now Director of the Department of Tropical Research of the New York Zoölogical Society.

Gifted with a style that is clear and entertaining, he imparts his information to the layman in such fascinating books as *The Edge of the Jungle* and *The Arcturus Adventure.*

The young writer would do well to study the use of sense appeal and rhythms in Mr. Beebe's prose.

"As a matter of fact, the things of mine people like best have been written in the tree-tops, or in ditches, or sitting on coral four fathoms down. Two chapters in my book on Haiti were thus written. Kipling and Dunsany are my ideals in writing, and as for sheer literature and word usage, Professor Wheeler's 'Dry Rot' in his recent book cannot be beaten."

—WILLIAM BEEBE.

THE DREAM OF THE YELLOW-THROAT [1]

Many of us look with longing to the days of Columbus; we chafe at the thought of no more continents to discover; no unknown seas to encompass. But at our very doors is an "undiscovered bourne," from which, while the traveller invariably returns, yet he will have penetrated but slightly into its mysteries. This unexplored region is night.

When the dusk settles down and the creatures of sunlight seek their rest, a new realm of life awakens into being. The flaring colours and loud bustle of the day fade and are lost, and in their place come soft, gray tones and silence. The scarlet tanager seeks some hidden perch and soon from the same tree slips a silent, ghostly owl; the ruby of the hummingbird dies out as the gaudy flowers of day close their petals, and the gray wraiths of sphinx moths appear and sip nectar from the spectral moonflowers.

. . . . . .

With feet shod with silence, let us creep near a dense tangle of sweetbrier and woodbine late some summer evening and listen to the sounds of the night-folk. How few there are that our ears can analyse! We huddle close to the ground and shut our eyes. Then little by little we open them and set our senses of sight and hearing at keenest pitch. Even so, how handicapped are we compared to the wild creatures. A tiny voice becomes audible, then dies away,—entering for a moment the narrow range of our coarse hearing,—and finishing its message of invitation or challenge in vibrations too fine for our ears.

. . . . . .

[1] From *The Log of the Sun*. Reprinted by permission of Henry Holt and Company.

Were we crouched by a dense yew hedge, bordering an English country lane, a nightingale might delight us,—a melody of day, softened, adapted, to the night. If the air about us was heavy with the scent of orange blossoms of some covert in our own southland, the glorious harmony of a mocking-bird might surge through the gloom,—assuaging the ear as do the blossoms another sense.

But sitting still in our own home tangle let us listen,—listen. Our eyes have slipped the scales of our listless civilized life and pierced the darkness with the acuteness of our primeval forefathers; our ears tingle and strain.

A slender tongue of sound arises from the bush before us. Again and again it comes, muffled but increasing in volume. A tiny ball of feathers is perched in the centre of the tangle, with beak hidden in the deep, soft plumage, but ever and anon the little body throbs and the song falls gently on the silence of the night: "I beseech you! I beseech you! I beseech you!" A Maryland yellow-throat is asleep and singing in its dreams.

As we look and listen, a shadowless something hovers overhead, and, looking upward, we see a gray screech owl silently hanging on beating wings. His sharp ears have caught the muffled sound; his eyes search out the tangle, but the yellow-throat is out of reach. The little hunter drifts away into the blackness, the song ends and the sharp squeak of a mouse startles us. We rise slowly from our cramped position and quietly leave the mysteries of the night.

POLLIWOG PROBLEMS[1]

The ancient Phœnicians, Egyptians, Hindus, Japanese, and Greeks all shared the belief that the whole world was hatched from an egg made by the Creator. This idea of development

[1] From *The Log of the Sun.* Reprinted by permission of Henry Holt and Company.

is at least true in the case of every living thing upon the earth to-day; every plant springs from its seed, every animal from its egg. And still another sweeping, all-inclusive statement may be made,—every seed or egg at first consists of but one cell, and by the division of this into many cells, the lichen, violet, tree, worm, crab, butterfly, fish, frog, or other higher creature is formed. A little embryology will give a new impetus to our studies, whether we watch the unfolding leaves of a sunflower, a caterpillar emerging from its egg, or a chick breaking through its shell.

The very simplest and best way to begin this study is to go to the nearest pond, where the frogs have been croaking in the evenings. A search among the dead leaves and water-soaked sticks will reveal a long string of black beads. These are the eggs of the toad; if, however, the beads are not in strings, but in irregular masses, then they are frogs' eggs. In any case take home a tumblerful, place a few, together with the thick, transparent gelatine, in which they are encased, in a saucer, and examine them carefully under a good magnifying glass, or, better still, through a low-power microscope lens.

You will notice that the tiny spheres are not uniformly coloured but that half is whitish. If the eggs have been recently laid the surface will be smooth and unmarked, but have patience and watch them for as long a time as you can spare. Whenever I can get a batch of such eggs, I never grudge a whole day spent in observing them, for it is seldom that the mysterious processes of life are so readily watched and followed.

Keep your eye fixed on the little black and white ball of jelly and before long, gradually and yet with never a halt, a tiny furrow makes its way across the surface, dividing the egg into equal halves. When it completely encircles the sphere you may know that you have seen one of the greatest wonders of the world. The egg which consisted of but one cell is now divided into two exactly equal parts, of the deepest significance. Of the latter truth we may judge from the fact that if one of those cells should be injured, only one-half a polliwog would result,—either a head or a tail half.

Before long the unseen hand of life ploughs another furrow across the egg, and we have now four cells. These divide into eight, sixteen, and so on far beyond human powers of numeration, until the beginnings of all the organs of the tadpole are formed. While we cannot, of course, follow this development, we can look at our egg every day and at last see the little *wiggle heads* or polliwogs (from *pol* and *wiggle*) emerge.

In a few days they develop a fin around the tail, and from now on it is an easy matter to watch the daily growth. There is no greater miracle in the world than to see one of these aquatic, waterbreathing, limbless creatures transform before your eyes into a terrestrial, four-legged frog or toad, breathing air like ourselves. The humble polliwog in its development is significant of far more marvellous facts than the caterpillar changing into the butterfly, embodying as it does the deepest poetry and romance of evolution.

Blue dusk, that brings the dewy hours,
Brings thee, of graceless form in sooth.
—Edgar Fawcett.

AMONG EMINENT HUMORISTS

RING W. LARDNER

Humorist

Mr. Lardner is a popular humorist who hardly needs an introduction to college students. His method of writing is largely the use of exaggeration and extravagance and sometimes the deliberate misuse of English. His *How to Write Short Stories* is a travesty on certain types of fiction. He begins his book with a Preface of "instructions" on how to write stories and then proceeds to give "examples" of story-writing —examples not far removed from the stuff that one can find on the news stands.

HOW TO WRITE SHORT STORIES [1]

A glimpse at the advertising columns of our leading magazines shows that whatever else this country may be shy of, there is certainly no lack of correspondence schools that learns you the art of short-story writing. The most notorious of these schools makes the boast that one of their pupils cleaned up $5000.00 and no hundreds dollars writing short stories according to the system learnt in their course, though it don't say if that amount was cleaned up in one year or fifty.

However, for some reason another when you skin through the pages of high class periodicals, you don't very often find them cluttered up with stories that was written by boys or gals who had win their phi beta skeleton keys at this or that story-writing college. In fact, the most of the successful authors of the short fiction of to-day never went to no kind of a college, or if they did, they studied piano tuning or the barber trade. They could of got just as far in what I call the literary game if they had of stayed home those four years and helped mother carry out the empty bottles.

The answer is that you can't find no school in operation up to date, whether it be a general institution of learning or a school that specializes in story writing, which can make a great author out of a born druggist.

But a little group of our deeper drinkers has suggested that maybe boys and gals who wants to take up writing as their life work would be benefited if some person like I was to give them a few hints in regards to the technic of the short story, how to go about planning it and writing it, when and where to plant the love interest and climax, and finally how to market the finished product without leaving no bad taste in the mouth.

[1] Preface to *How to Write Short Stories*, by Ring Lardner. Reprinted by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

Well, then, it seems to me like the best method to use in giving out these hints is to try and describe my own personal procedure from the time I get inspired till the time the manuscript is loaded on to the trucks.

The first thing I generally always do is try and get hold of a catchy title, like for instance, "Basil Hargrave's Vermifuge," Or "Fun at the Incinerating Plant." Then I set down to a desk or flat table of any kind and lay out 3 or 4 sheets of paper with as many different colored pencils and look at them cock-eyed a few moments before making a selection.

How to begin—or, as we professionals would say, "how to commence"—is the next question. It must be admitted that the method of approach ("*l'approchement*") differs even among first class fictionists. For example, Blasco Ibáñez usually starts his stories with a Spanish word, Jack Dempsey with an "I" and Charley Peterson with a couple of simple declarative sentences about his leading character, such as "Hazel Gooftree had just gone mah jong. She felt faint."

Personally it has been my observation that the reading public prefers short dialogue to any other kind of writing and I always aim to open my tale with two or three lines of conversation between characters—or, as I call them, my puppets—who are to play important rôles. I have often found that something one of these characters says, words I have perhaps unconsciously put into his or her mouth, directs my plot into channels deeper than I had planned and changes, for the better, the entire sense of my story.

To illustrate this, let us pretend that I have laid out a plot as follows: Two girls, Dorothy Abbott and Edith Quaver, are spending the heated term at a famous resort. The Prince of Wales visits the resort, but leaves on the next train. A day or two later, a Mexican reaches the place and looks for accommodations, but is unable to find a room without a bath. The two girls meet him at the public filling station and ask him for a contribution to their autograph album. To their amazement, he utters a terrible oath, spits in their general direction and hurries

out of town. It is not until years later that the two girls learn he is a notorious forger and realize how lucky they were after all.

Let us pretend that the above is the original plot. Then let us begin the writing with haphazard dialogue and see whither it leads:

"Where was you?" asked Edith Quaver.

"To the taxidermist's," replied Dorothy Abbott.

The two girls were spending the heated term at a famous watering trough. They had just been bathing and were now engaged in sorting dental floss.

"I am getting sick in tired of this place," went on Miss Quaver.

"It is mutual," said Miss Abbott, shying a cucumber at a passing paper-hanger.

There was a rap at their door and the maid's voice announced that company was awaiting them downstairs. The two girls went down and entered the music room. Garnett Whaledriver was at the piano and the girls tiptoed to the lounge.

The big Nordic, oblivious of their presence, allowed his fingers to form weird, fantastic minors before they strayed unconsciously into the first tones of Chopin's 121st Fugue for the Bass Drum.

From this beginning, a skilled writer could go most anywheres, but it would be my tendency to drop these three characters and take up the life of a mule in the Grand Canyon. The mule watches the trains come in from the east, he watches the trains come in from the west, and keeps wondering who is going to ride him. But she never finds out.

The love interest and climax would come when a man and a lady, both strangers, got to talking together on the train going back east.

"Well," said Mrs. Croot, for it was she, "what did you think of the Canyon?"

"Some cave," replied her escort.

"What a funny way to put it!" replied Mrs. Croot. "And now play me something."

Without a word, Warren took his place on the piano bench and at first allowed his fingers to form weird, fantastic chords on the black keys. Suddenly and with no seeming intention, he was in the midst of the second movement of Chopin's Twelfth Sonata for Flute and Cuspidor. Mrs. Croot felt faint.

That will give young writers an idea of how an apparently trivial thing such as a line of dialogue will upset an entire plot and lead an author far from the path he had pointed for himself. It will also serve as a model for beginners to follow in regards to style and technic. I will not insult my readers by going on with the story to its obvious conclusion. That simple task they can do for themselves, and it will be good practice.

So much for the planning and writing. Now for the marketing of the completed work. A good many young writers make the mistake of enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope, big enough for the manuscript to come back in. This is too much of a temptation to the editor.

Personally I have found it a good scheme to not even sign my name to the story, and when I have got it sealed up in its envelope and stamped and addressed, I take it to some town where I don't live and mail it from there. The editor has no idea who wrote the story, so how can he sent it back? He is in a quandary.

In conclusion let me warn my pupils never to write their stories—or, as we professionals call them, "yarns"—on used paper. And never to write them on a post-card. And never to send them by telegraph (Morse code).

Stories ("yarns") of mine which have appeared in various publications—one of them having been accepted and published by the first editor that got it—are reprinted in the following pages and will illustrate in a half-hearted way what I am trying to get at.

STEPHEN LEACOCK

Humorist

Humorist and head of the department of Economics and Political Science at McGill University is Mr. Leacock. That may seem a bit paradoxical since Political Science and Economics seem, to most students, far removed from anything humorous. Without a great stretch of the imagination, on the other hand, one can guess at the recreation this avocation of Mr. Leacock's has been. Mr. Leacock, humorist, however, has overshadowed Mr. Leacock, professor, in popular estimation; so that his books seem hardly the product of an avocation.

The humorists, like the other familiar essayists, must not be taken too lightly, for they usually have their philosophy and their criticism of life.

Mr. Leacock has said in his autobiography that he "would sooner have written *Alice in Wonderland* than the whole *Encyclopædia Britannica*."

"To write well it is first necessary to have something to say. Many people would like to write merely to be called writers; and many people would like to think so as to be called thinkers. But the people who write best are not trying to write at all. John Bunyan did not know that he had a 'style' and Xenophon was not trying to 'compose.' There are many things in life which can never be attained for their own sake, but come to us as backgrounds in the pursuit of something else. Happiness is one of these, and literary achievement is another. Therefore think first and

write afterwards. Yet if you ask me how to learn to think, I can only tell you that I do not know. It seems hardly possible to get into a fit of wilful earnestness. '*Poeta nascitur*,' said some one, '*non fit*.' Yet that is too discouraging a motto. Perhaps it is that a person who tries to write, earnestly, sedulously, and resolutely, will be rewarded by attaining incidentally to something else neither sought nor expected, such as ability to play the banjo, or a sense of humour. With that I leave the topic."

—Stephen Leacock.

THE DRAMA AS I SEE IT[1]

Studies in the Plays and Films of Yesterday and To-Day

III.—"DEAD MEN'S GOLD"

A film of the Great Nevada Desert

A film of the great Nevada desert in which Red-blooded, Able-Bodied Men and Women, a hundred per cent American, live and love among the cactus and chaparral. Something of the Ozone of the Cow Pasture mingled with the gloom of the great cañons blows all through this play.

Shall we go together this raw gusty afternoon to the enchantment of the Moving Pictures? Here, this looks a good place, this large and lighted hallway leading off the street itself. Let's get our tickets from this Golden Girl behind the glass, seated there under a magic spell no doubt. This *must* be a good play, look how pretty the girl is! Two, yes please, downstairs—extra ten cents? oh, the Amusement Tax, of course!

Now through these doors and down this corridor, and through these swinging doors again and into the dark. What a vast place it is. Dear me, it's absolutely empty! Empty? Oh, no, they are all there but you don't see them yet, seated silent in the dark, like toads under leaves. Excuse me, sir, I'm afraid I stepped on your foot. I beg your pardon, madam, I didn't see the little girl.

All that bright picture stuff being flashed on the screen? Never mind it now till we get our seats. It's not part of our play anyhow. There, sit down in this row—now we can look—what does it say?—TURKISH TROOPS ENTER THE—something—I couldn't see—anyway it doesn't matter where they enter, it's

[1] Reprinted from *Over the Footlights*, pp. 72–91. Copyright, 1923, by Dodd, Mead and Company, Inc.

only the News of the World. PASADENA CALIFORNIA PRESIDENT HARDING PRESENTS FLOWERS TO GIRL GUIDES STATE UNIVERSITY OF OHIO DEFEATS MIAMI AT BASKET-BALL NATIVES OF DUTCH PAPUA HUNTING FROGS PRINCE ARTHUR IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY CATCHING TARPON: Oh, don't let us bother with all this, the pictures haven't begun yet!

Ah, now it's going to begin. Look at that notice on the screen:

DEAD MEN'S GULCH IN WHICH FULL-BLOODED MEN AND WOMEN LIVE AND LOVE AMONG THE CACTUS AND CHAPARRAL

AUTHORIZED BY THE CENSOR OF NEW YORK STATE

That sounds interesting, doesn't it? Let's see what's put up next. Ah, a great face, a huge face under a cowboy hat, a face with a grin on it, yes, that's him, see, it says so underneath:

BIG-HEARTED JIM SHERIFF OF DEAD BONES COUNTY NEVADA

See him turn his face round as he grins. My! how honest and attractive the human face looks when you make it four feet long. I wish they'd put it upside down. I think it would look even better. Now, what's this next—ah—

BESSEMER STEEL, BANKER, OF NEW YORK

—very rich indeed evidently. How do I know that?—Oh, pshaw, you don't understand Moving Pictures—look at his gray spats and that white frill along his waistcoat—that means a millionaire. No, no, this isn't the play yet, these are only the people who are going to be in the play when it starts. Ah, *now* look!

MAISIE, BESSEMER STEEL'S ONLY DAUGHTER

Isn't she just cute! See her smile, no wonder they applaud her—and who is this?

DAN YEGG, BAD MAN OF DEAD MEN'S GULCH

Bad, well I should say so! And now see all these little scenes going rapidly past—well, they're not the play yet—those are merely places that are going to be *in* the play—just little touches of lonely desert, and terrible caverns, and a dear little vignette

of a man choking another in a cave—and a pretty little wee glimpse of a man dying of thirst—just little foretastes of the play itself. It looks good stuff, doesn't it? Now, we're off!

BESSEMER STEEL OF NEW YORK, BANKER AND FINANCIER, HAS SPENT HIS LIFE IN THE AMASSING OF MILLIONS

There he is in his office: see all the desks and stenographers round him. What a big, dull face he has; like a bullfrog you say? Yes, all New York bankers have faces like that in the Movies. See him speaking into his desk telephone. Say, isn't he authoritative? Now, look, he's listening. Must be about money from the way he shuts up his face. I guess he's refusing somebody one of those millions that he's amassed. Now he's signing a check: Now he's receiving a telegram. . . . In fact, by this time I think we've quite grasped the idea that he's a rich banker with no soul. In fact, I think I could have grasped it a little sooner, couldn't you? But, still, remember the Moving Pictures have to be made clear to the humblest intelligence. And that isn't us. . . . Ah, ha, no *soul* did we say?—Look at this:

THE ONLY TENDER SPOT IN THE BANKER'S HEART IS FOR HIS DAUGHTER MAISIE. TO HER HE DENIES NOTHING

See, the pictures are about to establish the fact that Maisie is denied nothing. Look at her there in her palatial home, romping with a pet dog. Oh, how sweet she is! See her kiss that dog—oh, my, I wonder what they pay that dog for his part. There she is, riding her pony round the grounds; now she is entertaining a whole bevy of her girl friends on the lawn; now she's in a store buying rich things—say, I think it's proved up to the hilt that that girl is denied nothing. On with the film—but wait—just a minute—did you notice among the clerks in the office, that young man . . . sort of Spanish-looking, mean-looking—kind of a crook—species of a skunk—evidently *not* a hundred per cent American—in fact hardly twenty per cent? See the way he keeps a sort of furtive eye on the banker. Say, I believe that fellow must come into the play somehow—just watch him.

Never mind, he's gone, but he'll come in again. Now we go on. Ah, this is more like:

ASCOT WRIGHT, STUDENT AT HARVARD

I'm glad it's Harvard. So much more class to it than the Ontario Agricultural College—

HAS DISCOVERED IN HIS RESEARCHES IN THE HARVARD LIBRARY THE LOCATION OF A LOST GOLD MINE IN A CAVERN IN DEAD MEN'S GULCH NEAR GRAVEYARD CANON IN DEAD BONES COUNTY NEVADA

Here we have him, Ascot Wright researching in the library, the way all Harvard students do. How neat he is! I thought all researchers looked pretty dusty, but perhaps not. Anyhow, Ascot is as neat as a pin, and athletic-looking, and awfully well dressed for a student. Perhaps his father is a Harvard professor.

Now see! Evidently he's struck something among the books—see him take paper from the leaves of an old volume! He's examining it—feverishly—say, I can just tell that Ascot has discovered a gold mine. He's working his face just the way a student does when he finds one. Ah, see that! You don't understand? Those pictures represent what Ascot is reading about. Look, that's the Great Western Desert. . . . See the little troop of people, horsemen and mules with packsaddles, crossing it, see the steel uniforms and breastplates, and swords—early Spaniards, that's what they are, the first discoverers of the West . . . look, they've entered a cavern—oh, say! the gloom of it! They're digging with pickaxes! Look, look! They're piling up great bars of gold. They're mad with excitement—they're quarreling—they're fighting—they're stabbing one another . . . Look, dead bodies—dead bones—dead bones in the cavern—dead bones all along the trail—it means the survivors tried to escape, do you see? Look, here's one, he's the last . . . he's dying of thirst in the desert; see him writing on a bit of paper . . . there, he's folded it into a missal, a prayer book or something. I know what it is—it's the description of all about the mine in the cavern, and the piled-up gold, do you see, that's

the paper that Ascot Wright has found in the Harvard library three hundred years later. Look, it's saying so:

THE MANUSCRIPT WRITTEN IN LATIN BY THE DYING SPANISH EXPLORER PEDRO ALVAREZ DE ESTORGA IS DECIPHERED BY THE HARVARD STUDENT

There's Ascot, look at him with the paper in front of him, deciphering it!—deciphering *Latin!* Isn't he a bird? My! A Harvard education is a wonderful thing! Now, what's it saying?

THE HARVARD STUDENT LAYS HIS DISCOVERY BEFORE THE GREAT FINANCIER

There he is, that's Ascot in Bessemer Steel's inner office. How neat he looks in his covert coat and his hard hat! These Harvard students certainly have class. He's explaining to the banker all about the mine. . . . The great banker is listening. . . . He's hearing all about the documents. . . . See the pictures go by again—desert—cavern—bones—more bones—dying Spaniard—document—bones—gold—He's got it. These New York bankers are just lightning at picking up bones and gold.

Now he's speaking:

MR. WRIGHT, THIS MUST BE KEPT A PROFOUND SECRET

Oh, but can it be? Look who's listening . . . that clerk, you remember the crook, the one with the cunning face, he's pushed open the door a little way. He's standing listening—they don't see him.

. . . WE WILL GO WEST AT ONCE. I WILL DEFRAY THE EXPENSES OF THE SEARCH AND DIVIDE WITH YOU FIFTY-FIFTY

What splendid English those great bankers use! So clear, isn't it?

And just then, who comes dancing into the office through the side door? Maisie. Isn't she just sweet with her fur round her neck; say look, she's got one of those new skirts. Watch her go and throw her arms around the banker's neck. See his face light up! In fact, you can see him light it up. Now he is introducing

Ascot Wright to Maisie. They bow to each other—say, Ascot is taken with Maisie right away, isn't he? Now the Spanish clerk comes in with papers in his hands. He bows to Maisie. How coldly she nods to him. But look at his eyes when he looks at her. I get it, don't you? And that look of hate which he hands to Ascot. Those Spaniards certainly have temperament, the moving pictures would be lost without them.

Now the banker is speaking:

MR. GONZALEZ, I AM LEAVING TONIGHT FOR NEVADA. WILL YOU KINDLY MAKE THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR MY TRANSPORTATION. . . .

Look, Maisie wants to go, too. She's questioning her father . . . he's shaking his head . . . she's put her arms around his neck. Oh, take her, take her, or I'll buy a ticket to Nevada and take her myself.

Scene changed. The Pennsylvania Station. Look at all the people. Isn't it just wonderful to see the Pennsylvania Station in the moving pictures? Much better than in real life; but then, so's everything. They're leaving for Nevada. Maisie is going, too; there she is: do you notice she's got on one of those new coats they're wearing? Do you like them? And there's Ascot. That's a nice valise he has . . . and the banker, and Gonzalez. No, he's not going, he's just seeing them off. The banker's giving him papers and instructions . . . there, they're getting on their journey. See the landscape flying past—now they're in a dining car. See the darky waiters—look at the banker ordering lunch. I'll bet he knows how. He'll eat lunch all the way to Nevada.

But look—we're back at the station. It's Gonzalez, he's buying a ticket. He's getting on the train . . . I see it, don't you? He's following them. I knew he would.

Now the scene has changed altogether. They're arriving in Nevada. This is Cañon City. . . . What a queer empty spot . . . shack houses and desert and hills all around it. . . . See the wooden hotel, with the veranda and the men on horseback with leather trousers and with lariats on the pommel of the

saddle, and the men leaning against the veranda posts with lariats slung over their arms. Look at that big man with the slouch hat and the wide face! That's the one it showed at the beginning. He's Big Jim, the sheriff . . . he's talking to them . . . they're explaining what they want.

Now it's changed again. Where is this place?—Oh, yes, I recognize it—it's a saloon—see the bar and all the bottles and the bartender leaning over it—pretty tough-looking isn't it . . . see the men sitting at the little table drinking whisky. . . . I've seen this sort of place a hundred times in the movies, haven't you? It's always called Pete's Place or something like that. . . . That's Gonzalez, one of the men drinking, and that other is Dan Yegg the bad man that we saw, and the rest, I guess, are bandits . . . they must be. . . . Now, Gonzalez is explaining. He's telling about Bessemer Steel and Ascot Wright coming to hunt for the gold . . . he's telling the story of the Spanish explorers. . . . There it goes—desert—bones, gold, more bones, dying Spaniard. They've got it. Look how excited they get.

Now it's changed back to Ascot and his friends. . . . They're mounting on horseback. Doesn't Maisie look nice in that short skirt? I guess she brought it with her on purpose. Look at the armed men, quite a troop of them. Oh, I guess they'd need them in a place like that. . . . Big Jim is pointing and giving advice; I suppose he's telling them the way to Dead Men's Gulch. There, they're off, clattering out of the town and away.

SEPARATED FROM THEIR ARMED ESCORT, ASCOT AND HIS COMPANIONS MAKE THEIR WAY INTO THE HEART OF DEAD MEN'S GULCH

Separated from their armed escort? A crazy thing to do in a place like that, you say? Oh, yes, but they always do it, in all the romances. The first thing you have to do with an armed escort is to separate yourself from it.

But say, look at the Gulch. Isn't that the gloom spot! See the great walls of rock towering above their heads, and the

litter of bowlders where they pick their way. Look, that's a snake, a real snake! Ugh! Aren't they crazy to go into a place like that? There's Ascot leading them—with a little bit of map or chart in his hand. And, oh look! look! Do you see that? Those heads behind the rocks, they're being followed—it's Gonzalez and Dan Yegg and Mexican bandits. Say, it's just madness to get separated from that escort.

What's this? They've stopped. Ascot's pointing. He's found the entrance of a sort of tunnel into the cliff . . . they're going into it. . . . They're carrying flashlights. . . . The light shines on the rock walls. . . . What a fearsome place. . . . Look, written there on the wall in strange lettering:

PEDRO ALVAREZ DE ESTORGA
1621

They gather round it. . . . They're reading the inscription. . . . Now they're going on. The tunnel is widening—it's opening into a great cavern . . . notice the high ceiling and the hanging rocks with the water dripping from them. . . . I suppose it's dripped like that for centuries—see the floor all sand—and there! bones of dead men, and a steel breastplate and part of a broken sword, and over in the corner gold piled up in bars, and great nuggets of it heaped up—on the floor.

Ascot is picking up the gold and showing it to Maisie. Bessemer Steel has taken up a nugget and is examining it. I bet he knows to a fraction what it is worth. Ha! He's showing it and speaking:

I ESTIMATE THAT THERE IS AT A CONSERVATIVE ESTIMATE TWO MILLION DOLLARS OF GOLD LYING AT OUR FEET

Say! Two million! and at a conservative estimate! Think of the coolness of the man making a conservative estimate in a place like that.

Great Heavens! The whole three of them have turned in sharp alarm! They hear something—some one in the tunnel. Here they come dashing into the cavern—armed men—Gon-

zalez and Yegg and the bandits. They've rushed at Ascot and the banker . . . three of them are fighting Ascot all at once . . . go to it, Ascot, that's the way. Now he's down—no he's up again—he's down—they're clubbing him—and the banker, Dan Yegg has him down and is choking him. That's the way, choke him—keep it up. Now this is really enjoyable. This is the real thing . . . go on—keep on choking him . . . that's right, pound Ascot over the head with a rock—admirable—I do like these choking scenes don't you?

They're both insensible—inanimate on the floor of the cave—now they've grabbed Maisie—they're binding her with cords—good . . . twist her up tight—that's the way. Give her another wind. It enhances the educational value of the film.

There, they've gathered her up . . . they've put the gold into bags . . . they're carrying Maisie and the gold down the tunnel . . . they're coming out at the entrance. Oh, see what they're doing . . . they're blocking the mouth of the tunnel with great rocks . . . the bodies of Ascot and Bessemer will never be found.

Now they're lifting Maisie into a motor car . . . that must have been waiting down the Gulch . . . they've got her mouth gagged; I hadn't noticed that before. That's a good touch, isn't it? . . . There, they're all in . . . they're off . . . out of the gulch . . . out on the mesa . . . away . . . away . . . fading into the distant hills . . . gone.

Where is it now? It's such a poor light, I can't see, can you? Oh yes, I get it. It's inside the cave again. . . . Ascot and Bessemer Steel flat on the sand . . . the light is that electric torch still lying on its side and burning. . . . Look, Ascot moved his arm . . . he's reviving . . . he's half sitting up . . . he's feeling Bessemer Steel's heart. Bessemer is reviving, too. They'll both be all right in a few minutes. They were only clubbed with rocks and stabbed and choked. That's nothing. Movie actors go through far worse than that and revive. . . . Didn't I tell you . . . Ascot has stood up . . . he walks painfully . . . for five seconds . . . now he walks all right . . .

he's looking round . . . he's taking the torch and going into the tunnel . . . he's coming back . . . he's speaking to Bessemer:

THEY HAVE WALLED UP THE MOUTH OF THE TUNNEL

Yes, Ascot, we knew that, we saw them doing it. But look at the horror on Bessemer Steel's face . . . now he's speaking.

ASCOT, WE ARE LOST. THERE IS NOTHING IN FRONT OF US BUT A SLOW DEATH

But look at Ascot . . . see his set jaw and his clenched hand and his brave face: see what he says:

WE ARE NOT LOST MR. STEEL. I CAN SAVE US YET

Oh, bully for you Ascot, that's the stuff. That Harvard training does it every time.

Whatever is Ascot doing now? . . . he's picking up the broken bits of the old Spanish armor . . . he's fitting things together . . . what's he making? He's taken out a long thin wire from his pocket, a coil of it . . . he's fastened a weight to it, he's thrown it to the roof of the cave . . . it's caught on a jag of rock . . . now's he's fastening it down tight on the ground and attaching something to it. Ah, I catch on, I see it, don't you? Why, radio! He's got a radio machine with him; now they'll make it all clear in writing in a minute—didn't I tell you? There it is:

ASCOT WRIGHT WITH THE AID OF A WIRE AND THE FRAGMENTS OF OLD ARMOR AND AN ELECTRIC TORCH MAKES A RADIO

"MR. STEEL IN FIVE MINUTES I SHALL BE IN COMMUNICATION WITH CANON CITY"

Look! He's getting into communication . . . zik—zik—see the big blue sparks running down the wire and lighting up the cave . . . zik—zak—zak—zak—zik . . . he's sending his message.

Ah! Here's the other end of it. The wireless station at Canon City. See the operator in his room, with a sort of helmet on, and the wires and sparks all round him . . . zik—zak—zik . . . the message is coming through. Look at the operator—all

hurry and alarm, he writes down the message . . . he's dashed out with it in his hand . . . he's reading it to Big Jim, the Sheriff, see the excited crowd gathering. Jim's haranguing them.

MR. STEEL AND ASCOT WRIGHT ARE WALLED UP IN A CAVE OFF DEAD MAN'S GULCH. MISS STEEL HAS BEEN CARRIED OFF BY BANDITS. I WANT EVERY MAN THAT CAN RIDE AND HANDLE A GUN

Hurrah! That's the way—off they go. See them leap on the horses and off in a whirl of dust . . . see the Winchester rifles slung over their shoulders . . . there's Big Jim at the head of them . . . out of the town and over the desert . . . There, they're riding into the Gulch . . . Ascot must have given them the directions . . . they've halted . . . they're at the walled-up tunnel . . . they're tearing down the stones . . . they're entering the cave . . . it's bright now with torches . . . and crowded with men . . . they've found Ascot and Bessemer Steel . . . Big Jim has put a flask to their lips . . . that'll help them. . . . Now Ascot's explaining, the gold, the attack, everything. . . . See the crowd listening with the light on their faces!

Out of the cave . . . out into the bright sunshine . . . and riding, riding for life . . . but where? How can they know . . . and the motor had a long start. What is that they plan to do . . . riding, riding, they don't seem to be chasing anything, they seem to be going somewhere. Oh, look, what is this place with tall frame sheds and the level ground—oh! I get it—fine! fine! See that great sign:

AËROPLANE STATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES

Isn't that great? What a thing it is to live under a government that keeps aëroplanes even away out in the desert.

Now they're running an aëroplane out of the shed—what a huge machine. They're getting in, Bessemer Steel, and Big Jim, the Sheriff, and his men. See, Ascot is going to steer: I guess his head is all right again now. That little thumping with the rocks merely woke up his brain.

Away they go—up—up—see the machine soaring in the blue sky, floating, hovering like a great bird watching for its prey . . . it's circling round searching for the motor car. Aha! they must see it now. Look at the aëroplane swooping down . . . and see there's the motor . . . rushing over the mesa . . . here it's coming right past us. Gonzalez is at the wheel. There's Maisie in the back of the car still tied . . . here's the aëroplane right after it . . . look at Dan Yegg standing up in the car and shooting at the aëroplane with a revolver. . . . They're shooting back . . . that's Big Jim with his Winchester, leaning over the edge of the car . . . look the motor running straight for the edge of the canon . . . Great Cæsar, it's gone over . . . it's a drop of a thousand feet . . . look . . . there's the car falling through the air, the wheels still spinning . . . and there's the aëroplane chasing it as it falls . . . watch Big Jim . . . he's got a coil of rope, a lasso . . . he's lassoed Maisie with it. . . . Hurrah, they're hauling her on to the aëroplane. . . . The motor can fall now, it doesn't matter where it falls to. . . . There's the aëroplane landed . . . Maisie's unbound . . . she's in her father's arms . . . he's handing her to Ascot . . .

What's it saying?—Oh, that's just the wind-up.

AND SO THESE TWIN SOULS JOIN HENCEFORTH TO WALK LIFE'S PATHWAY HAND IN HAND NEXT WEEK MUTT AND JEFF AMONG THE MONKEYS DON'T MISS IT

ROBERT BENCHLEY

Humorist

Mr. Benchley has been editor of the *Harvard Lampoon*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Life*. *Of All Things*, *Love Conquers All*, and *Pluck and Luck* are his books that are familiar to anyone who takes delight in the American humor of extravagance and caricature.

A parody, like his *Christmas Afternoon*, must not be taken as derogatory to the original. It can point out good characteristics or bad, or it can make clear by the keen analysis behind it, the style or manner of the writer. It is the latter that Mr. Benchley accomplished in his parody on Dickens' *Christmas Carol.*

CHRISTMAS AFTERNOON [1]

Done in the Manner, If Not the Spirit, of Dickens

What an afternoon! Mr. Gummidge said that, in his estimation, there never had *been* such an afternoon since the world began, a sentiment which was heartily endorsed by Mrs. Gummidge and all the little Gummidges, not to mention the relatives who had come over from Jersey for the day.

In the first place, there was the *ennui*. And such *ennui* as it was! A heavy, overpowering *ennui*, such as results from a participation in eight courses of steaming, gravied food, topping off with salted nuts which the little old spinster Gummidge from Oak Hill said she never knew when to stop eating—and true enough she didn't—a dragging, devitalizing *ennui*, which left its victims strewn about the living room in various attitudes of prostration suggestive of those of the petrified occupants in a newly unearthed Pompeiian dwelling; an *ennui* which carried with it a retinue of yawns, snarls and thinly veiled insults, and which ended in ruptures in the clan spirit serious enough to last throughout the glad new year.

Then there were the toys! Three and a quarter dozen toys to be divided among seven children. Surely enough, you or I might say, to satisfy the little tots. But that would be because we didn't know the tots. In came Baby Lester Gummidge, Lillian's boy, dragging an electric grain-elevator which happened to be the only toy in the entire collection which appealed to little Norman, five-year-old son of Luther, who lived in Rahway. In came curly-headed Effie in frantic and throaty disputation with Arthur, Jr., over the possession of an articulated zebra. In came Everett, bearing a mechanical negro which would no

[1] From *Of All Things*. Reprinted by permission of Henry Holt and Company.

longer dance, owing to a previous forcible feeding by the baby of a marshmallow into its only available aperture. In came Fonlansbee, teeth buried in the hand of little Ormond, which bore a popular but battered remnant of what had once been the proud false-bosom of a hussar's uniform. In they all came, one after another, some crying, some snapping, some pulling, some pushing—all appealing to their respective parents for aid in their intra-mural warfare.

And the cigar smoke! Mrs. Gummidge said that she didn't mind the smoke from a good cigarette, but would they mind if she opened the windows for just a minute in order to clear the room of the heavy aroma of used cigars? Mr. Gummidge stoutly maintained that they were good cigars. His brother, George Gummidge, said that he, likewise, would say that they were. At which colloquial sally both the Gummidge brothers laughed testily, thereby breaking the laughter record for the afternoon.

Aunt Libbie, who lived with George, remarked from the dark corner of the room that it seemed just like Sunday to her. An amendment was offered to this statement by the cousin, who was in the insurance business, stating that it was worse than Sunday. Murmurings indicative of as hearty agreement with this sentiment as their lethargy would allow came from the other members of the family circle, causing Mr. Gummidge to suggest a walk in the air to settle their dinner.

And then arose such a chorus of protestations as has seldom been heard. It was too cloudy to walk. It was too raw. It looked like snow. It looked like rain. Luther Gummidge said that he must be starting along home soon anyway, bringing forth the acid query from Mrs. Gummidge as to whether or not he was bored. Lillian said that she felt a cold coming on, and added that something they had for dinner must have been undercooked. And so it went, back and forth, forth and back, up and down, and in and out, until Mr. Gummidge's suggestion of a walk in the air was reduced to a tattered impossibility and the entire company glowed with ill-feeling.

In the meantime, we must not forget the children. No one

else could. Aunt Libbie said that she didn't think there was anything like children to make a Christmas; to which Uncle Ray, the one with the Masonic fob, said, "No, thank God!" Although Christmas is supposed to be the season of good cheer, you (or I—for that matter) couldn't have told, from listening to the little ones, but what it was the children's Armageddon season, when Nature had decreed that only the fittest should survive, in order that the race might be carried on by the strongest, the most predatory, and those possessing the best protective coloring. Although there were constant admonitions to Fonlansbee to "Let Ormond have that whistle now; it's his," and to Arthur, Jr., not to be selfish but to "give the kiddie-car to Effie; she's smaller than you are," the net result was always that Fonlansbee kept the whistle and Arthur, Jr., rode in permanent, albeit disputed, possession of the kiddie-car. Oh, that we mortals should set ourselves up against the inscrutable workings of Nature!

Hallo! A great deal of commotion! That was Uncle George stumbling over the electric train, which had early in the afternoon ceased to function and which had been left directly across the threshold. A great deal of crying! That was Arthur, Jr., bewailing the destruction of his already useless train, about which he had forgotten until the present moment. A great deal of recrimination! That was Arthur, Sr., and George fixing it up. And finally a great crashing. That was Baby Lester pulling over the tree on top of himself, necessitating the bringing to bear of all of Uncle Ray's knowledge of forestry to extricate him from the wreckage.

And finally Mrs. Gummidge passed the Christmas candy around. Mr. Gummidge afterward admitted that this was a tactical error on the part of his spouse. I no more believe that Mrs. Gummidge thought they wanted that Christmas candy than I believe that she thought they wanted the cold turkey which she later suggested. My opinion is that she wanted to drive them home. At any rate, that is what she succeeded in doing. Such cries as there were of "Ugh!" "Don't let me see

another thing to eat!" and "Take it away!" Then came hurried scramblings in the coat-closet for over-shoes. There were the rasping sounds made by cross parents when putting wraps on children. There were insincere exhortations to "come and see us soon" and to "get together for lunch some time." And, finally, there were slammings of doors and the silence of utter exhaustion, while Mrs. Gummidge went about picking up stray sheets of wrapping paper.

And, as Tiny Tim might say in speaking of Christmas afternoon as an institution, "God help us, every one."

FRANK McKINNEY HUBBARD ("ABE MARTIN")

Cartoonist

America has always had its humorists. They have been the kind of men who could speak in terms of exaggerated nonsense and keep a sober face. Mr. Hubbard's humor perhaps belongs to the school of Bill Nye, "Josh Billings," and "Artemus Ward"—that is, if one can say that he belongs to any school. He imitates nobody. His character, "Abe Martin," has become so notable in Mr. Hubbard's state that the "home" of this droll figure can be pointed out to anyone who visits Brown County, Indiana, and is willing to believe anything. To these people, the existence of Mr. Hubbard has been forgotten, but the "existence" of Abe Martin has not. That is, after all, rather a compliment to Mr. Hubbard's creation.

Mr. Hubbard sees everything in caricature. His comments and his drawings that illustrate them are the "exaggerated nonsense" that hides a good deal of truth.

Mr. E. V. Lucas has recently made a selection of Abe Martin's sayings and put them in a volume called *Abe Martin's Wisecracks*.

Mr. Hubbard writes characteristically:

"I cannot tell you how I happened to begin my 'Abe Martin' feature. It just began much the same as a career of an oboe-player. We never know what we are going to be, especially if it's anything worth while. Life is too uncertain to map out a career."

—KIN HUBBARD.

ABE MARTIN ON THE MODERN STANDARD OF LIVING [1]

Ever-buddy's dressed up an' ridin', an' still they grumble about the times not bein' what they ought to be. After feelin' round an' listenin' in I've come to the conclusion that the cause o' so much harpin' an' restlessness kin be set out in three paragraphs.

First, nobuddy seems to think he's cleanin' up as much money as he thinks he should be cleanin' up.

Second, all luxuries are now classed as necessities.

Third, the modern standard o' "comfortable livin'" is about thirty-eight laps ahead o' the earnin' ability o' the average person.

Then add to this startlin' state of affairs the widespread an' rapidly growin' notion that three bath rooms an' a triple garage are the inalienable right o' ever' man. Then ther's another idee that's findin' lodgment in th' breast o' ever' wage earner, whether he's worth eight dollars a week, or fifty cents an hour, an' that is he's determined to give each of his six or seven children a college education. Nobuddy is livin' quietly an' peacefully any more. We all know what livin' comfortable used to mean—lots o' bacon, flannel underwear, a cistern, some wood or coal, an' shoes. What has come over the country, what great economic upheaval has caused the brazen assumption that it is our unquestionable right and privilege to live jest like th' president of a bank or brewery used to live? I've no doubt at all that times are now really more prosperous than they've ever been in the history of this country, but ever'buddy's so hopelessly involved in tryin' to maintain the modern standard of livin' that they imagine times are hard. Ther's too many new ways o'

[1] Copyright, John F. Dille Co. Courtesy of the *Indianapolis News*.

spendin' money, an' scarcely anything new in the way o' earnin' it. Keepin' women's legs an' feet looking trim, to say nothin' o' three tiled bath rooms, 'll keep any wage earner's nose to the emory wheel. The average wage earner, or salaried man, wuz fer better off when he pulled down twelve dollars a week an' his wife's legs didn' show. It would be fun to know what part woman's craze to expose her anatomy has played in bringin' about the economic unrest in the last few years. Automobiles, bath tubs, radios, an' the craze to educate a house full o' tow headed children, all o' these things have done much to upset the tranquillity o' the country, but I believe short skirts have been the biggest drain on both th' wealth an' composure o' the country. I have no patience with discontented farmers when ther wives an' daughters kin sit on th' porch, or walk around in the weeds wearin' cotton stockin's. "Oh, I saved a little money while my wife wuz laid up, but she's out again now," I heard a feller complain the other day.

DON MARQUIS

Humorist, poet, dramatist, short-story writer

The young student of English literature and composition must eventually come to the realization that a real humorist is never merely a funny man. He must discover, as maturer critics before him have discovered, that the real humorists of literature have been men who were thinking seriously. It would be pretty safe to say that they were and are "disillusioned." If they are like Mark Twain, they find life all bitter; if they are like Don Marquis, they find something good in spite of the bitter.

Mr. Marquis is a good spinner of yarns: his "The Saddest Man" is an excellent example of the traditional American humor and it meets all the requirements that Mark Twain set down for the telling of such a story. His *Hermione* is a series of satirical thrusts at young brainless enthusiasts who, among their group of Serious Thinkers, discuss antiques, ancestors, and Russian literature. Of stories like "Looney the Mutt," the student must beware: if he is a lover of slapstick comedy, he may laugh in the same spirit that the companions of Looney laughed; but if he reads more carefully, he will realize that the author has written more subtly than that.

Sometimes Mr. Marquis drops the mask of humor and writes—merely seriously. The most serious, most difficult, and best written of all his work is *The Dark Hours*, a dramatization of the last hours in the life of Christ. It is a difficult bit of writing well done. One discerning critic has compared this play to the Greek tragedies of Æschylus and Sophocles.

"The only function of language, as I see it, is the direct expression of the thought. The exact expression is exceedingly difficult to manage. It is probably just as difficult for the professional writer as it is for the unpracticed writer. The faculty of exact expression, I should think, would be as valuable to the business man or to anyone else in any walk of life, as it is to the person who is trying to relate a story, sing a song, or construct an advertisement.

"I do not think it is true that a person can always be understood no matter how he expresses himself. It takes the utmost pains for one to make oneself understood, whether one is a lawyer, a chauffeur, a physician, or a writer."

—Don Marquis.

HERMIONE TAKES UP LITERATURE [1]

We've been going in for Astrological Research lately—our Little Group of Modern Thinkers, you know—and we've picked our own personal stars.

Only it seems such a shame, doesn't it, that one isn't allowed to change stars? Keeping the same star all your life is rather monotonous, don't you think?

Though, of course, if one changed and got someone else's star things might be frightfully complicated, mightn't they?

But it would make a charming little story, wouldn't it, for a girl to change stars, you know, and find that her new star belonged to some quite nice young man, and, of course, after that, their destinies would be one.

I get some of the most original plots for stories!

Fothergil Finch has often said to me that that is one difference between genius and talent. When you have genius, you know, things like that just come to you; but if you only have talent you must work and work for them.

"If I only had your spontaneity, Hermione!" Fothergil often says.

And really, it's never been any trouble for me at all to dash off an idea, though of course they would have to be touched up by the editors a little before they could be printed.

Fothergil said the other night I should try poetry.

"Why, Fothy," I said, "if I lived a hundred years I never could make two lines rhyme with each other!"

But he said rhyme was out of fashion anyhow, and—would you believe it?—while we were talking I got an idea for a poem and just dashed it off then and there—a vers libre poem you know, and it goes:

[1] Reprinted from *Hermione* by permission of D. Appleton and Company.

What becomes of
People when they die?
I used to ask when I was a little child,
And now since
I am grown up I am not sure that I know!

"Fothy," I said, "it was so easy—that makes me afraid it isn't really good!"

"Ah," he said, "that modesty proves you are a genius! Heavens, what would I not give to have your spontaneity, your modesty, your spontaneity—"

But I interrupted him. Another idea had come to me—just like that, and—would you believe it?—I dashed off another one, right then and there! It went:

I see the rain fall.
It is no effort for the rain to fall.
Why is it no effort?
Because it falls spontaneously!
O Spontaneity! Spontaneity!
Rain is genius,
Genius is rain!
Fall, fall, rain!

Fothy is going to get them printed—he knows a lot of vers libre publishers—if Papa will only put up the money. And one nice thing about poor dear Papa is that he always will put it up.

So that night I wrote twenty or thirty more of them, and they were all good—all works of genius—they all came to me just like the first ones!

The last one came to me just as I was going to bed. I looked out of the window and saw the moon and ran and got a pencil and wrote:

I see the moon out of the window.
I wonder what it thinks of me?
Wouldn't the moon and I both be surprised
If we found that neither one of us
Thought anything at all about the other?

The book's going to be vellum, you know, and that sort of thing. I'm going to have a gown just like the cover and give a fête when it comes out.

The worst thing about being literary, though, is that it makes one feel so responsible for the gift, if you know what I mean, doesn't it?

SINCERITY IN THE HOME [1]

Sincerity should be the keynote of a life, don't you think?

Sincerity—beauty—use—these are my watchwords.

I heard such an interesting talk on sincerity the other evening. I belong to a Little Group of Serious Thinkers who are taking up sincerity in all its phases this week.

We discussed Sincerity in the Home.

So many people's homes, you know, do not represent anything personal.

The *sincere* home should be full of purpose and personality—decoration, rugs, ornaments, hangings and all, you know.

The home shows the soul.

So I'm doing over our house from top to bottom, putting personality into it.

I've a room I call the Ancestors' Room.

You know, when one has ancestors, one's ancestral traditions keep one up to the mark, somehow. You know what I mean—blood will tell, and all that. Ancestors help one to be sincere.

So I've furnished my Ancestors' Room with all sorts of things to remind me of the dear dead-and-gone people I get my traditions from.

Heirlooms and portraits and things, you know.

Of course, all our own family heirlooms were destroyed in a fire years ago.

So I had to go to the antique shops for the portraits and furniture and chairs and snuff boxes and swords and fire irons and things.

[1] Reprinted from *Hermione* by permission of D. Appleton and Company.

I bought the loveliest old spinet—truly, a find!

I can sit down to it and imagine I am my own grandmother's grandmother, you know.

And it's wonderful to sit among those old heirlooms and feel the sense of my ancestors' personalities throbbing and pulsing all about me!

I feel, when I sit at the spinet, that my personality is truly represented by my surroundings at last.

I feel that I have at last achieved sincerity in the midst of my traditions.

And there's a picture of the loveliest old lady . . . old-fashioned costume, you know, and all that . . . and the hair dressed in a very peculiar way. . . .

Mama says it's a *made-up* picture—not really an antique at all—but I can just feel the personality vibrating from it.

I got it at a bargain, too.

I call her—the picture, you know—after an ancestress of mine who came to this country in the old Colonial days.

With William the Conqueror, you know—or maybe it was William Penn. But it couldn't have been William Penn, could it? For she went to New Jersey—Orange, N. J. Was it William of Orange? More than likely. . . .

Anyhow, I call the picture after her—Lady Clarissa, I call it. She married a commoner, as so many of the early settlers of this country did.

When I sit at the spinet and look at Lady Clarissa I often wonder what people do without family traditions.

And it's such a comfort to know I'm in a room that really represents my personality!

AMONG EMINENT SHORT-STORY WRITERS

STORY WRITERS

KATHERINE MANSFIELD

Story-writer

Katherine Mansfield (*née* Kathleen Beauchamp) is said to have had her first story published at the age of nine and in the same year received a prize for a theme written in the village school of her home town in New Zealand. At Queen's College in England, which she attended later, she edited the college magazine. Although she returned home after her five years there, she found it impossible to resist London which was a stimulus to her literary endeavors. Like so many young writers, she found it difficult to win recognition, but finally had her work published in *The New Age*. Her *In a German Pension* won her some public recognition, but her publishers went bankrupt and paid her no royalties.

She contributed also to a magazine called *Rhythm* which John Middleton Murry, then an Oxford undergraduate, and Michael Sadlier were editing. It was this literary acquaintanceship that led to the marriage of Miss Mansfield and Mr. Murry. An interesting account of her life and her struggles in the literary world is recorded in her *Journal* and in its introduction by Mr. Murry. At the time when she was finally receiving praise of other great writers, she died. Ironically enough she now has many imitators.

Her stories are sketches and episodes that vividly reveal the traits of character of the people in her books.

Oct. 1921.—I wonder why it should be so difficult to be humble. I do not think I am a good writer; I realise my faults better than any one else could realise them. I know exactly when I fail. And yet, when I have finished a story and before I have begun another, I catch myself preening

my feathers. It is disheartening. There seems to be some bad old pride in my heart; a root of it that puts out a thick shoot on the slightest provocation. . . . This interferes very much with work. One can't be calm, clear, good as one must be, while it goes on. I look at the mountains, I try to pray—and I think of something *clever*. It's a kind of excitement within one which shouldn't be there. Calm yourself. Clear yourself. And anything that I write in this mood will be no good; it will be full of *sediment*. If I were well, I would go off by myself somewhere and sit under a tree. One must learn, one must practice to *forget* oneself. I can't tell the truth about Aunt Anne unless I am free to enter into her life without self-consciousness. Oh, God! I am divided still, I am bad, I fail in my personal life. I lapse into impatience, temper, vanity, and so I fail as thy priest. Perhaps poetry will help.

I have just thoroughly cleaned and attended to my fountain pen. If after this it leaks, then it is *no* gentleman!

Nov. 13, 1921.—It is time I started a new journal. Come my unseen, my unknown, let us talk together. Yes, for the last two weeks I have written scarcely anything. I have been idle; I have *failed*. Why? Many reasons. There has been a kind of confusion in my consciousness. It has seemed as though there was no time to write. The mornings, if they are sunny, are taken up with sun-treatment; the post eats away the afternoon. And at night I am tired. But it goes deeper. Yes, you are right. I haven't felt able to yield to the kind of contemplation that is necessary. I haven't felt pure in heart, not humble, not good. There's been a stirring up of sediment. I look at the mountains and I see nothing but mountains. Be frank! I read rubbish . . . Out of hand? Yes, that describes it. Dissipated, vague, not positive, and above all,

above everything, not working as I should be working—wasting time.

Wasting time! The old cry—the first and last cry. Why do ye tarry? Ah, why indeed? My deepest desire is to be a writer, to have "a body of work" done—and there the work is, there the stories wait for me, grow tired, wilt, fade, because I will not come. When first they knock, how eager and fresh they are! And I hear and I acknowledge them, and still I go on sitting at the window, playing with the ball of wool. What is to be done?

I must make another effort at once. I must begin all over again. I must try and write simply, fully, freely, from my heart. Quietly, caring nothing for success or failure, but just going on. . . .

But now to resolve! And especially to keep in touch with life. With the sky, this moon, these stars, these cold candid peaks.

—From *The Journal of Katherine Mansfield.*[1]

[1] Reprinted by and with permission of and special arrangement with Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., authorized publishers.

THE FLY [1]

"Y'are very snug in here," piped old Mr. Woodifield, and he peered out of the great, green leather armchair by his friend the boss's desk as a baby peers out of its pram. His talk was over; it was time for him to be off. But he did not want to go. Since he had retired, since his . . . stroke, the wife and the girls kept him boxed up in the house every day of the week except Tuesday. On Tuesday he was dressed up and brushed and allowed to cut back to the City for the day. Though what he did there the wife and girls couldn't imagine. Made a nuisance of himself to his friends, they supposed. . . . Well, perhaps so. All the same, we cling to our last pleasures as the tree clings to its last leaves. So there sat old Woodifield, smoking a cigar and staring almost greedily at the boss, who rolled in his office chair, stout, rosy, five years older than he, and still going strong, still at the helm. It did one good to see him.

Wistfully, admiringly, the old voice added, "It's snug in here, upon my word!"

"Yes, it's comfortable enough," agreed the boss, and he flipped the *Financial Times* with a paper-knife. As a matter of fact he was proud of his room; he liked to have it admired, especially by old Woodifield. It gave him a feeling of deep, solid satisfaction to be planted there in the midst of it in full view of that frail old figure in the muffler.

"I've had it done up lately," he explained, as he had explained for the past—how many?—weeks. "New carpet," and he pointed to the bright red carpet with a pattern of large white rings. "New furniture," and he nodded towards the massive bookcase and the table with legs like twisted treacle.

[1] Reprinted from *The Dove's Nest* by Katherine Mansfield, by and with permission of and special arrangement with Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., authorized publishers.

"Electric heating!" He waved almost exultantly towards the five transparent, pearly sausages glowing so softly in the tilted copper pan.

But he did not draw old Woodifield's attention to the photograph over the table of a grave-looking boy in uniform standing in one of those spectral photographers' parks with photographers' storm-clouds behind him. It was not new. It had been there for over six years.

"There was something I wanted to tell you," said old Woodifield, and his eyes grew dim remembering. "Now what was it? I had it in my mind when I started out this morning." His hands began to tremble, and patches of red showed above his beard.

Poor old chap, he's on his last pins, thought the boss. And, feeling kindly, he winked at the old man, and said jokingly, "I tell you what. I've got a little drop of something here that'll do you good before you go out into the cold again. It's beautiful stuff. It wouldn't hurt a child." He took a key off his watch-chain, unlocked a cupboard below his desk, and drew forth a dark, squat bottle. "That's the medicine," said he. "And the man from whom I got it told me on the strict Q. T. it came from the cellars at Windsor Cassel."

Old Woodifield's mouth fell open at the sight. He couldn't have looked more surprised if the boss had produced a rabbit.

"It's whisky, ain't it?" he piped, feebly.

The boss turned the bottle and lovingly showed him the label. Whisky it was.

"D'you know," said he, peering up at the boss wonderingly, "they won't let me touch it at home." And he looked as though he was going to cry.

"Ah, that's where we know a bit more than the ladies," cried the boss, swooping across for two tumblers that stood on the table with the water-bottle, and pouring a generous finger into each. "Drink it down. It'll do you good. And don't put any water with it. It's sacrilege to tamper with stuff like this. Ah!" He tossed off his, pulled out his handker-

chief, hastily wiped his moustaches, and cocked an eye at old Woodifield, who was rolling his in his chaps.

The old man swallowed, was silent a moment, and then said faintly, "It's nutty!"

But it warmed him; it crept into his chill old brain—he remembered.

"That was it," he said, heaving himself out of his chair. "I thought you'd like to know. The girls were in Belgium last week having a look at poor Reggie's grave, and they happened to come across your boy's. They're quite near each other, it seems."

Old Woodifield paused, but the boss made no reply. Only a quiver in his eyelids showed that he heard.

"The girls were delighted with the way the place is kept," piped the old voice. "Beautifully looked after. Couldn't be better if they were at home. You've not been across, have yer?"

"No, no!" For various reasons the boss had not been across.

"There's miles of it," quavered old Woodifield, "and it's as neat as a garden. Flowers growing on all the graves. Nice broad paths." It was plain from his voice how much he liked a nice broad path.

The pause came again. Then the old man brightened wonderfully.

"D'you know what the hotel made the girls pay for a pot of jam?" he piped. "Ten francs! Robbery, I call it. It was a little pot, so Gertrude says, no bigger than a half-crown. And she hadn't taken more than a spoonful when they charged her ten francs. Gertrude brought the pot away with her to teach 'em a lesson. Quite right, too; it's trading on our feelings. They think because we're over there having a look around we're ready to pay anything. That's what it is." And he turned towards the door.

"Quite right, quite right!" cried the boss, though what was quite right he hadn't the least idea. He came round by his desk, followed the shuffling footsteps to the door, and saw the old fellow out. Woodifield was gone.

For a long moment the boss stayed, staring at nothing, while the grey-haired office messenger, watching him, dodged in and out of his cubby-hole like a dog that expects to be taken for a run. Then: "I'll see nobody for half an hour, Macey," said the boss. "Understand? Nobody at all."

"Very good, sir."

The door shut, the firm heavy steps recrossed the bright carpet, the fat body plumped down in the spring chair, and leaning forward, the boss covered his face with his hands. He wanted, he intended, he had arranged to weep. . . .

It had been a terrible shock to him when old Woodifield sprang that remark upon him about the boy's grave. It was exactly as though the earth had opened and he had seen the boy lying there with Woodifield's girls staring down at him. For it was strange. Although over six years had passed away, the boss never thought of the boy except as lying unchanged, unblemished in his uniform, asleep for ever. "My son!" groaned the boss. But no tears came yet. In the past, in the first months and even years after the boy's death, he had only to say those words to be overcome by such grief that nothing short of a violent fit of weeping could relieve him. Time, he had declared then, he had told everybody, could make no difference. Other men perhaps might recover, might live their loss down, but not he. How was it possible? His boy was an only son. Ever since his birth the boss had worked at building up this business for him; it had no other meaning if it was not for the boy. Life itself had come to have no other meaning. How on earth could he have slaved, denied himself, kept going all those years without the promise for ever before him of the boy's stepping into his shoes and carrying on where he left off?

And that promise had been so near being fulfilled. The boy had been in the office learning the ropes for a year before the war. Every morning they had started off together; they had come back by the same train. And what congratulations he had received as the boy's father! No wonder; he had taken to it marvellously. As to his popularity with the staff, every man

jack of them down to old Macey couldn't make enough of the boy. And he wasn't in the least spoilt. No, he was just his bright, natural self, with the right word for everybody, with that boyish look and his habit of saying, "Simply splendid!"

But all that was over and done with as though it never had been. The day had come when Macey had handed him the telegram that brought the whole place crashing about his head. "Deeply regret to inform you . . ." And he had left the office a broken man with his life in ruins.

Six years ago, six years . . . How quickly time passed! It might have happened yesterday. The boss took his hands from his face; he was puzzled. Something seemed to be wrong with him. He wasn't feeling as he wanted to feel. He decided to get up and have a look at the boy's photograph. But it wasn't a favorite photograph of his; the expression was unnatural. It was cold, even stern-looking. The boy had never looked like that.

At that moment the boss noticed that a fly had fallen into his broad inkpot, and was trying feebly but desperately to clamber out again. Help! help! said those struggling legs. But the sides of the inkpot were wet and slippery; it fell back again and began to swim. The boss took up a pen, picked the fly out of the ink, and shook it on to a piece of blotting-paper. For a fraction of a second it lay still on the dark patch that oozed round it. Then the front legs waved, took hold, and, pulling its small sodden body up it began the immense task of cleaning the ink from its wings. Over and under, over and under, went a leg along a wing, as the stone goes over and under the scythe. Then there was a pause, while the fly, seeming to stand on the tips of its toes, tried to expand first one wing and then the other. It succeeded at last, and, sitting down, it began, like a minute cat, to clean its face. Now one could imagine that the little front legs rubbed against each other lightly, joyfully. The horrible danger was over; it had escaped; it was ready for life again.

But just then the boss had an idea. He plunged his pen

back into the ink, leaned his thick wrist on the blotting paper, and as the fly tried its wings down came a great heavy blot. What would it make of that? What indeed! The little beggar seemed absolutely cowed, stunned, and afraid to move because of what would happen next. But then, as if painfully, it dragged itself forward. The front legs waved, caught hold, and, more slowly this time, the task began from the beginning.

He's a plucky little devil, thought the boss, and he felt a real admiration for the fly's courage. That was the way to tackle things; that was the right spirit. Never say die; it was only a question of . . . But the fly had again finished its laborious task, and the boss had just time to refill his pen, to shake fair and square on the new-cleaned body yet another dark drop. What about it this time? A painful moment of suspense followed. But behold, the front legs were again waving; the boss felt a rush of relief. He leaned over the fly and said to it tenderly, "You artful little b . . . ." And he actually had the brilliant notion of breathing on it to help the drying process. All the same, there was something timid and weak about its efforts now, and the boss decided that this time should be the last, as he dipped the pen into the inkpot.

It was. The last blot fell on the soaked blotting-paper, and the draggled fly lay in it and did not stir. The back legs were stuck to the body; the front legs were not to be seen.

"Come on," said the boss. "Look sharp!" And he stirred it with his pen—in vain. Nothing happened or was likely to happen. The fly was dead.

The boss lifted the corpse on the end of the paper-knife and flung it into the waste-paper basket. But such a grinding feeling of wretchedness seized him that he felt positively frightened. He started forward and pressed the bell for Macey.

"Bring me some fresh blotting-paper," he said, sternly, "and look sharp about it." And while the old dog padded away he fell to wondering what it was he had been thinking about before. What was it? It was . . . He took out his handkerchief and passed it inside his collar. For the life of him he could not remember.

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

Novelist, story-writer

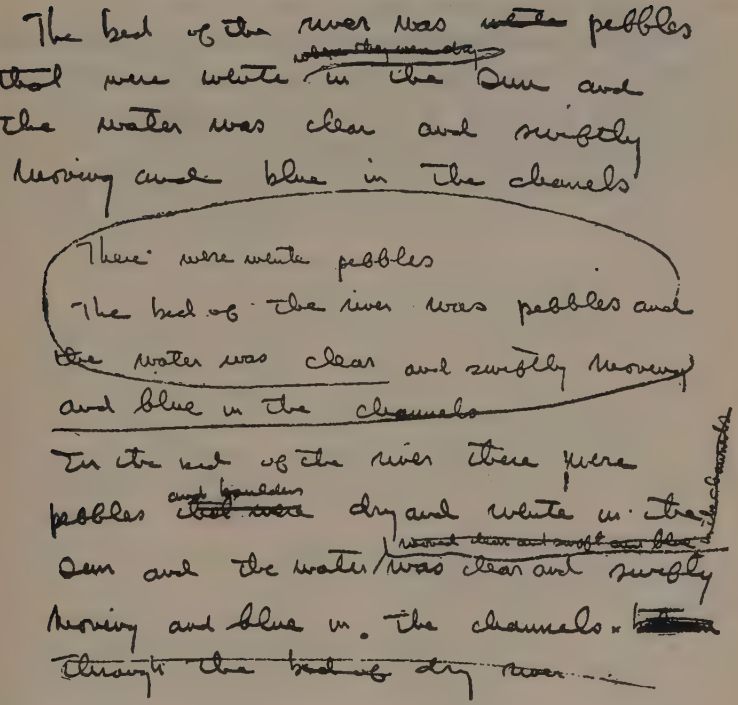
Mr. Hemingway has been catalogued as one of the "newer writers." His style is succinct and vivid. He tells what he sees of life, mostly of men and women who want of life what they have not or squander what they have. Certainly he is realistic; sometimes he is naturalistic. His stories are plain tales, plainly and therefore strikingly told.

"Everyone writes prose badly to start but by continuing some get to write it well. Stop or go on is the only advice I know.

"As for the practical side; I believe the typewriter is a curse of modern writing. It makes it too easy and the writing is solidified in type and is hard to change when it might still be kept plastic and be worked over and brought nearer to what it should be before it is cast in type. This all sounds very high flown but you must remember that you are asking some one engaged in a craft which he is constantly studying, practicing and trying to learn more about.

"I should think it might take a lifetime to learn to write prose well; your own prose that is; for if it is not your own it is of no value. Then if you had spent your life doing it perhaps you would have nothing to write about.

"The ideal way would be to live and then write or live and write at the same time. But it is very hard to serve two masters and a writer is very lucky if he has only two.



Facsimile of a page of manuscript by Ernest Hemingway showing how he revises a sentence.

"At any rate what we should avoid is developing a lot of completely articulate young professional novelists just out of the university who write one interesting novel; well written in anyone else's way of writing; fresh because it has youth; and successful for any of the above reasons—then to be followed by other novels, demanded by the success of the first and because the author is a professional writer, and all the time the author never living any life or learning anything or seeing anything because he, or even more possibly she, is so busy writing novels.

"You can study how this works out in England."

—Ernest Hemingway.

CAT IN THE RAIN [1]

There were only two Americans stopping at the hotel. They did not know any of the people they passed on the stairs on their way to and from their room. Their room was on the second floor facing the sea. It also faced the public garden and the war monument. There were big palms and green benches in the public garden. In the good weather there was always an artist with his easel. Artists liked the way the palms grew and the bright colors of the hotels facing the gardens and the sea. Italians came from a long way off to look up at the war monument. It was made of bronze and glistened in the rain. It was raining. The rain dripped from the palm trees. Water stood in pools on the gravel paths. The sea broke in a long line in the rain and slipped back down the beach to come up and break again in a long line in the rain. The motor cars were gone from the square by the war monument. Across the square in the doorway of the café a waiter stood looking out at the empty square.

The American wife stood at the window looking out. Outside right under their window a cat was crouched under one of the dripping green tables. The cat was trying to make herself so compact that she would not be dripped on.

"I'm going down and get that kitty," the American wife said.

"I'll do it," her husband offered from the bed.

"No, I'll get it. The poor kitty out trying to keep dry under a table."

The husband went on reading, lying propped up with the two pillows at the foot of the bed.

"Don't get wet," he said.

[1] From *In Our Time* by Ernest Hemingway. Published by Horace Liveright.

The wife went downstairs and the hotel owner stood up and bowed to her as she passed the office. His desk was at the far end of the office. He was an old man and very tall.

"Il piove," the wife said. She liked the hotel-keeper.

"Si, si, Signora, brutto tempo. It is very bad weather."

He stood behind his desk in the far end of the dim room. The wife liked him. She liked the deadly serious way he received any complaints. She liked his dignity. She liked the way he wanted to serve her. She liked the way he felt about being a hotel-keeper. She liked his old, heavy face and big hands.

Liking him she opened the door and looked out. It was raining harder. A man in a rubber cape was crossing the empty square to the café. The cat would be around to the right. Perhaps she could go along under the eaves. As she stood in the doorway an umbrella opened behind her. It was the maid who looked after their room.

"You must not get wet," she smiled, speaking Italian. Of course, the hotel-keeper had sent her.

With the maid holding the umbrella over her, she walked along the gravel path until she was under their window. The table was there, washed bright green in the rain, but the cat was gone. She was suddenly disappointed. The maid looked up at her.

"Ha perduto qualque cosa, Signora?"

"There was a cat," said the American girl.

"A cat?"

"Si, il gatto."

"A cat?" the maid laughed. "A cat in the rain?"

"Yes," she said, "under the table." Then, "Oh, I wanted it so much. I wanted a kitty."

When she talked English the maid's face tightened.

"Come, Signora," she said, "We must get back inside. You will be wet."

"I suppose so," said the American girl.

They went back along the gravel path and passed in the door. The maid stayed outside to close the umbrella. As the Ameri-

can girl passed the office, the padrone bowed from his desk. Something felt very small and tight inside the girl. The padrone made her feel very small and at the same time really important. She had a momentary feeling of being of supreme importance. She went on up the stairs. She opened the door of the room. George was on the bed, reading.

"Did you get the cat?" he asked, putting the book down.

"It was gone."

"Wonder where it went to," he said, resting his eyes from reading.

She sat down on the bed.

"I wanted it so much," she said. "I don't know why I wanted it so much. I wanted that poor kitty. It isn't any fun to be a poor kitty out in the rain."

George was reading again.

She went over and sat in front of the mirror of the dressing table looking at herself with the hand glass. She studied her profile, first one side and then the other. Then she studied the back of her head and her neck.

"Don't you think it would be a good idea if I let my hair grow out?" she asked, looking at her profile again.

George looked up and saw the back of her neck, clipped close like a boy's.

"I like it the way it is."

"I get so tired of it," she said. "I get so tired of looking like a boy."

George shifted his position in the bed. He hadn't looked away from her since she started to speak.

"You look pretty darn nice," he said.

She laid the mirror down on the dresser and went over to the window and looked out. It was getting dark.

"I want to pull my hair back tight and smooth, and make a big knot at the back that I can feel," she said. "I want to have a kitty to sit on my lap and purr when I stroke her."

"Yeah?" George said from the bed.

"And I want to eat at a table with my own silver and I

want candles. And I want it to be spring and I want to brush my hair out in front of a mirror and I want a kitty and I want some new clothes."

"Oh, shut up and get something to read," George said. He was reading again.

His wife was looking out of the window. It was quite dark now and still raining in the palm trees.

"Anyway, I want a cat," she said, "I want a cat. I want a cat now. If I can't have long hair or any fun, I can have a cat."

George was not listening. He was reading his book. His wife looked out of the window where the light had come on in the square.

Someone knocked at the door.

"Avanti," George said. He looked up from his book.

In the doorway stood the maid. She held a big tortoise-shell cat pressed tight against her and swung down against her body.

"Excuse me," she said, "the padrone asked me to bring this for the Signora."

SHERWOOD ANDERSON

Story-teller

In *A Story Teller's Story*, there is a striking character—a restless sort of being with a verve for "cutting a figure" and telling yarns of ancestors and kings,—yarns which nobody, probably, believed as much as himself. There is a woman of Italian blood in the tale, too, who is known chiefly for the profound impression that she made on her children. These were the parents of Sherwood Anderson and his brothers, all of whom grew up to be painters or writers. It is not to be wondered at, then, that Mr. Anderson lacked neither the gift nor the material for story-telling. He did not, however, begin writing until he was nearly forty. He spent many years in business, sometimes as an advertiser, and once as president of a manufacturing establishment in Ohio.

For a long time I have believed that crudity is an inevitable quality in the production of a really significant present-day American literature. How indeed is one to escape the obvious fact that there is as yet no native subtlety of thought or living among us? And if we are a crude and childlike people how can our literature hope to escape the influence of that fact? Why indeed should we want it to escape?

. . . . . .

We should first of all accept certain truths. Why should we Americans aspire to an appearance of subtlety that belongs not to us but to old lands and places? Why talk of intellectuality and of intellectual life when we have

not accepted the life we have? There is death in too much of American writing. Can you doubt what I say? Consider the smooth slickness of the average magazine story. There is often great subtlety of plot and phrase but there is no reality. Can such work be important? The answer is that the most popular magazine story or novel does not live in our minds for a month.

And what are we to do about it? To me it seems that as writers we shall have to throw ourselves with greater daring into life. We shall have to begin to write out of the people and not for the people. We shall have to find within ourselves a little of that courage. To continue along the road we are traveling is unthinkable. To draw ourselves apart, to live in little groups and console ourselves with the thought that we are achieving intellectuality is to get nowhere. By such a road we can hope only to go on producing a literature that has nothing to do with life as it is lived in these United States.

To be sure the doing of the thing I am talking about will not be easy. America is a land of objective writing and thinking. New paths will have to be made. The subjective impulse is almost unknown to us. Because it is close to life it works out into crude and broken forms. It leads along a road that such American masters of prose as James and Howells did not want to take but if we are to get anywhere we shall have to travel the road.

The road is rough. Who, knowing our America and understanding the life in our towns and cities, can close his eyes to the fact that life here is for the most part an ugly affair? As a people we have given ourselves to industrialism and industrialism is not lovely. If anyone can find beauty in an American factory town I wish he would show me the way. For myself I cannot find it. To me, and I am

living in industrial life, the whole thing is as ugly as modern war. I have to accept that fact and I believe a great step forward will have been taken when it is more generally accepted.

But why, I am constantly asked, is crudity and ugliness necessary? Why cannot a man like Mr. Dreiser write in the spirit of the early Americans, why cannot he see fun in life? What we want is the note of health. In the work of Mark Twain there was something wholesome and sweet. Why cannot the modern man be also wholesome and sweet?

To this I make answer that to me a man, say like Mr. Dreiser, is wholesome. He is true to something in the life about him and truth is always wholesome. Twain and Whitman wrote out of another age, out of an age and a land of forests and rivers. The dominant note of American life in their time was the noisy swaggering raftsman and the hairy-breasted woodsman. Today it is not so. The dominant note in American life today is the factory hand. When we have digested that fact, we can begin to approach the task of the present-day novelist with a new point of view.

It is, I believe, self-evident that the work of the novelist must always lie somewhat outside the field of philosophic thought. Your true novelist is a man gone a little mad with the life of his time. As he goes through life he lives, not in himself, but in many people. Through his brain march figures and groups of figures. Out of the many figures one emerges. If he be at all sensitive to the life about him and that life be crude, the figure that emerges will be crude and will crudely express itself.

I do not know how far a man may go on the road of subjective writing. The matter, I admit, puzzles me. There is something approaching insanity in the very idea of sinking yourself too deeply into modern American industrial life.

But it is my contention that there is no other road. If a man would avoid neat slick writing he must at least attempt to be brother to his brothers and live as the men of his time live. He must share with them the crude expression of their lives. To our grandchildren the privilege of attempting to produce a school of American writing that has more delicacy and color may come as a matter of course. I hope that will be true but it is not true now. And that is why, with so many of the younger Americans, I put my faith in the modern literary adventurers. We shall, I am sure, have much crude blundering American writing before the gift of beauty and subtlety in prose shall honestly belong to us.

—SHERWOOD ANDERSON in "An Apology for Crudity." [1]

[1] From *Sherwood Anderson's Notebook*, published by Horace Liveright.

IN A STRANGE TOWN [1]

A morning in a country town in a strange place. Everything quiet. No, there are sounds. Sounds assert themselves. A boy whistles. I can hear the sound above the more immediate ones here where I stand, at a railroad station. I have come away from home. I am in a strange place. There is no such thing as silence. Once I was in the country. I was at the house of a friend. "You see, there is not a sound here. It is absolutely silent." That was because he was used to the little sounds of the place, the humming of insects, the sound of falling water—far off—the faint clattering sound of a man with a machine in the distance, cutting hay. He was accustomed to the sounds and did not hear them. Here, where I am now, I hear a beating sound. Some one has hung a carpet on a clothes-line and is beating it. Another boy shouts, far off—"A-ho, a-ho."

It is good to go and come. You arrive in a strange place. There is a street facing a railroad track. You get off a train with your bag. Two porters fight for possession of you and the bag as you have seen porters do with strangers in your own town.

As you stand there, there are things to be seen too. You see the open doors of the stores on the street that faces the station. People go in and out. An old man stops and looks. "Why, there is the morning train," his mind is saying to him.

The mind is always saying such things to people. "Look, be aware," it says. The fancy wants to float free of the body. We put a stop to that.

Most of us live our lives like toads, sitting perfectly still, under a plantain leaf. We are waiting for a fly to come our way. When it comes out darts the tongue. We nab it.

That is all. We eat it.

[1] Reprinted from *Scribner's Magazine*, January 1930, by permission of the author.

But how many questions to be asked that are never asked. Whence came the fly? Where was he going?

He might have been going to meet his sweetheart. He was stopped, eaten.

The train on which I have been riding, a slow one, pauses for a time. All right, I'll go to the Empire House. As though I cared.

It is a small town—this one, to which I have come. In any event I'll be uncomfortable here. There will be the same kind of brass bed as at the last place to which I went, unexpectedly like this—with bugs in it perhaps. A travelling salesman will talk in a loud voice in the next room. He will be talking to a friend, another travelling salesman. "Trade is bad," one of them will say. "Yes, it is rotten."

There will be confidences about women picked up—some words heard, others missed. That is always annoying.

But why did I get off of the train here at this particular town? I remember that they said there was a lake here—that there was fishing. I thought I would fish.

Perhaps I expected to swim. I remember now.

"Porter, where is the Empire House? Oh, the brick one. All right, go ahead. I'll be along pretty soon. You tell the clerk to save me a room, with a bath, if they have one."

. . . . . .

I remember what I was thinking about. All my life since that happened I have gone off on adventures like this. A man likes to be alone sometimes.

Being alone doesn't mean being where there are no people. It means being where people are all strangers to you.

. . . . . .

There is a woman crying there. She is getting old, that woman. Well, I am myself no longer young. See how tired her eyes are. There is a younger woman with her. In time that younger woman will look exactly like her mother.

She will have the same patient resigned look. The skin will

sag on her cheeks, that are plump now. The mother has a large nose and so has the daughter.

There is a man with them. He is fat and has red veins in his face. For some reason I think he must be a butcher.

He has that kind of hands, that kind of eyes.

I am pretty sure he is the woman's brother. Her husband is dead. They are putting a coffin on the train.

They are people of no importance. People pass them casually. No one has come to the station to be with them in their hour of trouble. I wonder if they live here. Yes, of course they do. They live somewhere, in a rather mean little house, at the edge of town, or perhaps outside the town. You see the brother is not going away with the mother and daughter. He has just come down to see them off.

They are going, with the body, to another town where the husband, who is dead, formerly lived.

The butcher-like man has taken his sister's arm. That is a gesture of tenderness. Such people make such gestures only when some one in the family is dead.

The sun shines. The conductor of the train is walking along the station platform and talking to the station-master. They have been laughing loudly, having their little joke.

That conductor is one of the jolly sort. His eyes twinkle—as the saying is. He has his little joke with every station-master, every telegraph operator, baggage man, expressman, along the way. There are all kinds of conductors of passenger-trains.

There, you see, they are passing the woman whose husband has died and is being taken away somewhere to be buried. They drop their joke, their laughter. They become silent.

A little path of silence made by that woman in black, and her daughter, and the fat brother. The little path of silence has started with them at their house, has gone with them along streets to the railroad station, will be with them on the train and in the town to which they are going. They are people of no importance but they have suddenly become important.

They are symbols of Death. Death is an important, a majestic thing, eh?

. . . . . .

How easily you can comprehend a whole life, when you are in a place like this, in a strange place, among strange people. Everything is so much like other towns you have been in. Lives are made up of little series of circumstances. They repeat themselves over and over, in towns everywhere, in cities, in all countries.

They are of infinite variety. In Paris, when I was there last year, I went into the Louvre. There were men and women there making copies of the works of the old masters that were hung on the walls. They were professional copyists.

They worked painstakingly, were trained to do just that kind of work, very exactly.

And yet no one of them could make a copy. There were no copies made.

The little circumstances of no two lives anywhere in the world are just alike.

. . . . . .

You see I have come over into a hotel room now, in this strange town. It is a country-town hotel. There are flies in here. A fly has just alighted on this paper on which I have been writing these impressions. I stopped writing and looked at the fly. There must be billions of flies in the world, and yet, I dare say, no two of them are alike.

The circumstances of their lives not just alike either.

. . . . . .

I think I must come away from my own place on trips, such as I am on now, for a specific reason.

At home I live in a certain house. There is my own household, the servants, the people of my household. I am a professor of philosophy in a college in my town, hold a certain definite position there, in the town life and in the college life.

Conversations in the evening, music, people coming into our house.

Myself going to a certain office, then to a classroom where I lecture, seeing people there.

I know some things about those people. That is the trouble with me perhaps. I know something but not enough.

My mind, my fancy, becomes dulled looking at them.

I know too much and not enough.

. . . . . .

PHILIP GIBBS

Novelist, short-story writer, essayist

Sir Philip Gibbs is one of a family of distinguished writers: his father, Henry Gibbs, was a writer on educational subjects; his two brothers, Cosmo Hamilton (Gibbs) and Major Arthur Hamilton Gibbs, his sister Miss Helen Hamilton Gibbs and his son, Anthony, just out of Oxford, have all produced novels. Sir Philip Gibbs, at twenty-one, was an editor for Cassell and Company. During the Great War he attracted a good deal of praise as a British war correspondent and while at the front observed some of the life that afterwards colored his novels. He has written many novels, several volumes of history and a few books of essays, besides his many contributions to British newspapers. *People of Destiny* is of special interest to Americans, since it is an Englishman's view of Americans. His *Little Novels of Nowadays*, from which "Miss Smith of Smyrna" is taken, are some of the most vivid of his shorter pieces.

The adventure of journalism which has been mine—as editor, reporter, and war correspondent—is never a life of easy toil and seldom one of rich rewards. I would not recommend it to youth as a primrose path, nor to any one who wishes to play for safety in possession of an assured income, regular hours, and a happy home life.

It is of uncertain tenure, because no man may hold on to his job if he weakens under the nervous strain, or quarrels on a point of honour with the proprietor who pays him or with the editor who sets his task. Even the most

successful journalist—if he is on the writing side of a newspaper—can rarely bank on past achievements, however long and brilliant, but must forever jerk his brain and keep his curiosity untired.

As nobody, according to the proverb, has ever seen a dead donkey, so nobody has ever seen a retired reporter living on the proceeds of his past toil, like business men in other adventures of life. He must go on writing and recording, getting news until the pen drops from his hand, or the little bell tinkles for the last time on his typewriter, and his head falls over an unfinished sentence. . . . Well, I hope that will happen to me, but some people look forward to an easier old age.

I have known the humiliation of journalism, its insecurity, its never-ending tax upon the mind and heart, its squalor, its fever, its soul-destroying machinery for those who are not proof against its cruelties. Hundreds of times, as a young reporter, I was stretched to the last pull of nervous energy on some "story" which was wiped out for more important news. Often I went without food and sleep, suffered in health of body and mind, girded myself to audacities from which, as a timid soul, I shrank, in order to get a "scoop"—which failed.

The young reporter has to steel his heart to these disappointments. He must not agonize too much if, after a day and night of intense and nervous effort, he finds no line of his work in the paper, or sees his choicest prose hacked and mangled by impatient sub-editors, or his truth-telling twisted into falsity.

He is the Slave of the Machine. Home life is not for him, as for other men. He may have taken unto himself a wife—poor girl!—but though she serves his little dinner all piping hot, he has to leave the love feast for the bleak

streets, if the voice of the news-editor calls down the telephone.

So, at least, it was in my young days as a reporter on London newspapers, and many a time in those days I cursed the fate which had taken me to Fleet Street as a slave of the press.

Several times I escaped; taking my courage in both hands—and it needed courage, remembering a wife and babe—I broke with the spell of journalism and retired into quieter fields of literary life.

But always I went back! The lure of the adventure was too strong. The thrill of chasing the new "story," the interest of getting into the middle of life, sometimes behind the scenes of history, the excitement of recording sensational acts in the melodrama of reality, the meetings with heroes, rogues, and oddities, the front seats at the peep-show of Life, the comedy, the change, the comradeship, the rivalry, the test of one's own quality of character and vision, drew me back to Fleet Street as a strong magnet.

It was, after all, a great game! It is still one of the best games in the world for any young man with quick eyes, a sense of humour, some touch of quality in his use of words, and curiosity in his soul for the truth and pageant of our human drama, provided he keeps his soul unsullied from the dirt.

Looking back on my own career as a journalist, I know that I would not change for any other. Fleet Street, which I called in a novel *The Street of Adventure*, is still my home, and to its pavement my feet turn again from whatever part of the world I return.

—Philip Gibbs.[1]

[1] From *Adventures in Journalism*, pp. 1–3, by permission of the author.

MISS SMITH OF SMYRNA[1]

When I read in the newspapers that the Turks had entered Smyrna and had celebrated their victory by burning the Christian quarters and massacring men, women and children, according to the way of Islam, I thought of certain people whom I had met there a year before, and wondered what agony they had suffered before their death, or what chance of escape had been theirs.

There was Lieutenant Mazarakis, of the headquarters staff of the Greek army, who had been extremely hospitable to me and taken me to dinner several times at his villa, a mile or more outside the city beyond the Turkish quarter. He had introduced me to his wife, a beautiful woman—rather too plump perhaps—approaching middle age, with two boys and two girls, ranging from fourteen years to five or six, adorably pretty, with their pale faces and black eyes, and charming in their behaviour. The eldest girl, I remember, sang little songs with her mother, in Greek and French; and Lieutenant Mazarakis, nervously polite to me, desperately anxious to make a good impression on an Englishman who, as a writing man, might help the claims of Greece by friendly propaganda, was delighted by my sincere enjoyment of his family entertainment.

It was when he was out of the room for a moment, fetching another bottle of sweet Greek wine, that his wife spoke to me in English, which the children did not understand. Turning round on her music stool she asked me a question with an anxiety that revealed a great fear in her soul.

"Do you think my children are safe here?" After a moment's

[1] From *Little Novels of Nowadays*, pp. 37–63. Copyright 1924 by Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc.

pause she seemed to explain her fear. "My husband is so brave that he ignores all danger, but I am a coward for my little ones. Is Smyrna safe from the Turk?"

I was startled and a little confused. Even while she had been singing a French ballad, with her eldest girl's hand on her shoulder, and two babies on the floor by her side, and a small boy like a Greek statuette sitting back in an armchair listening and watching with grave eyes—a beautiful group as I remember them now—I had been chilled by a subconscious sense of fear and some foreboding of horror.

The Greek army held a line across Asia Minor, thirty miles inland from Smyrna. The Greek commander-in-chief, whom I had seen that morning in his headquarters on the sea front—an enormously fat old gentleman in a tight uniform with golden epaulettes and a string of decorations—had expressed his confidence not only in the strength of his line but in the ability of his troops to sweep the Turks before them.

"I have merely to give the order," he said, touching a piece of paper with his fat forefinger, "and the Greek army will advance as though on parade." He reiterated that phrase with sonorous satisfaction. "As though on parade, sir! It is only international politics—the intrigues of France and Italy, who support the Turkish Nationalists against the just claims of Greece—which prevents the immediate triumph of our arms."

A band was playing selections from Carmen outside the windows while the commander-in-chief gave me this audience. Everything seemed very merry and bright along the sea front of Smyrna, where the hot sunlight was dazzling on the white marble fronts of the rich Armenian quarter. Young staff officers of the Greek army, in waisted uniforms, with highly polished boots, laughed and chatted in the anteroom. A Greek gunboat—the *Imbros*—painted white, lay off the quay side, between a British battleship and an American cruiser. Smyrna seemed very safe under Greek domination.

But behind the Turkish lines, thirty miles away, were resolute men, under a leader named Mustapha Kemal, who was a great

diplomatist and a great soldier. He had, as I had seen in Moscow and Petrograd, agents accredited to Soviet Russia, obtaining money, arms and ammunition. His army was growing in power and discipline and fanatical faith. Every Turk in Constantinople was his supporter and fellow conspirator against the orders of a Sultan who was but the puppet and mouthpiece, they believed, of the Allied Powers. Mustapha Kemal had vowed to take Smyrna and to raise the whole Mohammedan world until the Crescent flew above its harbour.

I had no faith in the character and strength of the Greek army, in spite of the cheery optimism of the fat old gentleman in the golden epaulettes. I was conscious, while he spoke, of a sinister shadow lying beyond that sunlight in the port of Smyrna, and of a menace not made less perilous by selections from Carmen played by a Greek band outside headquarters.

So when the comely wife of Lieutenant Mazarakis turned to me and asked her question with immense fear in her eyes, I found it difficult to answer. I am thankful now that I was truthful, and not insincere for her husband's sake.

"I would not keep women or children here if I were a Greek officer who could send them away."

At that moment her husband came back with his bottle of sweet resinous wine. I think he saw the look of anguish in his wife's eyes, though she tried to hide it by turning to her music again.

"My wife is a little timid," he said, smiling and putting his hand on her shoulder. "Perhaps she has been telling you that she feels rather nervous in Smyrna? I hope you reassured her. The alternative is Athens, and I cannot bear to be separated from wife and bairns while I am stationed here, perhaps for years."

"Athens is a charming place," I answered. "The most beautiful little city, I think, in all Europe. I should feel happy if my family were there—if I were you."

A slight shadow crossed his face—a look of vexation, which he hid rapidly by a gay laugh.

"I thought I had convinced you that we hold Smyrna as securely as the English have London. And though I love Athens, you must admit that Smyrna is not without beauty. Even this villa is pretty good for a billet in time of war."

He glanced round the drawing-room, elegantly furnished by its former owner and improved by Lieutenant Mazarakis, who had brought from Athens some of his own household treasures—ancient statuettes of Hermes and Aphrodite, found by himself in Thrace; some French paintings, some exquisite rugs and hangings.

I did not argue with him. I could not tell him candidly that I had no faith at all in the power of the Greek army to hold Smyrna. His flamboyant patriotism, his passionate hope that the spirit of ancient Greece had reawakened in his race after more than a thousand years of sleep made all argument futile.

I merely smiled and raised my glass when he poured out some of his sweet wine, and drank to the eternal friendship between Greece and England. Then I said farewell, and going out into the garden looked back and raised my hat to this Greek family gathered in the doorway, through which a yellow light came into the darkness. Mazarakis was by the side of his wife, and she stood surrounded by her four children—the two little ones holding her skirt, the eldest girl with her arm round her mother's waist, the small boy leaning his sleepy head against her arm. I shall always remember them like that; but the remembrance is darkened by the thought of that night of horror when the Turks came down to Smyrna and bayoneted women and children and tossed their bodies into the flaming bonfires of their houses.

I wonder most what happened in those last hours to Miss Smith. In Athens and Constantinople and Mytilene, and other places of the Near East, I had heard vaguely of this lady, always under the title of "Miss Smith of Smyrna," as though she owned the place, or at least governed it. I had no notion whether she was young or old, ugly or beautiful, but whenever her name was mentioned in casual conversation by British naval officers, commercial travellers, army men, newspaper correspondents

and others whom chance had taken to Asia Minor, it was always spoken with a smile of admiration.

"I wonder what my aunt thinks of the situation," said a friend of mine—young Gerald Tuck, flag lieutenant of H. M. S. *Dragon*—as we sat one day in the Pera Palace Hotel watching the parade of Armenians, Russians and Turks outside the windows, while we sipped cocktails and discussed the pro-Greek policy of the British Government, the troubles of "Tino," and pro-Turk activities of France and Italy.

"Why should your aunt think anything about it?" I asked, and he surprised me by his answer, spoken with a whimsical smile.

"Well, she happens to be Miss Smith of Smyrna!"

"Who on earth is Miss Smith—apart from being your distinguished aunt?" I inquired. "You're about the sixth man during the last week who has alluded to that mysterious lady as though she were equal in importance to the Sultan."

"More important, in a way," said Gerald; "though perhaps, as her unworthy nephew, I shouldn't say so. The Sultan doesn't count for anything with the real fellows at Angora. But Mustapha Kemal kisses the hand of my little old aunt, and there are lots of Turks who divide their reverence between the Prophet Mohammed and Miss Smith of Smyrna. Surprised you don't know her, old man!"

When I confessed my blank ignorance of her personality and prestige, Gerald Tuck gave me some enlightment.

In his slangy way he began by saying she was a regular old sport, and the pluckiest old thing in Asia Minor, but after these generalities he condescended to a few particulars.

Miss Smith, it appeared, was the daughter of old Mediterranean Smith, who, away back in the early Victorian days, had built up the biggest trade in the Near East—general merchandise, spices, rugs, every blessed thing, said Gerald Tuck, bought or sold between Venice and Persia. Half a century ago he had established a big store in the Grand Rue de Pera—I must have passed it a score of times—another in Frank Street, Smyrna; a

third in Athens. When he died, some time in the '80's, he left a fortune of something like six millions to Miss Smith, and his business as a going concern.

Her agents began to play tricks with the trade when the old man's tiger eyes were asleep at last. Armenians, Greeks, Turks and Israelites thought it an easy game with a young woman—she was young in those days—as their new boss. They soon found out their mistake. Miss Smith came to Constantinople with a riding whip in one hand and a small bag containing her wardrobe in the other. After an examination of accounts she flogged her Armenian manager out of the stores—though she was a little whisp of a woman—and promoted a young Scot who had been one of the clerks.

In Smyrna she used her money to build schools for Christians and Turks, paid her teachers well, and at unexpected times came down from her house in Burnabat—away in the hills—riding on a white camel, to see that the children were getting value for her money. A bit of a martinet? Well, a sort of Queen Victoria of the Near East. Nothing small about her, and with big ideas and a strong hand. Kind-hearted too, as I should find if I were ever hard up for hospitality in Smyrna.

During the war she saved the Armenian and Greek communities in Smyrna from wholesale massacre, and had ridden out alone to the Turkish High Command to dress them down for the damnable cruelty of their treatment of the Christian minorities. It was owing to her influence, partly, anyhow, that the massacre ceased. They knew she was a friend of the Turks when they behaved decently. That was the secret of her pull. Old Mediterranean Smith had been pro-Turk up to his eyebrows, and had spent all his spare time hunting with Turkish pashas and entertaining them at Burnabat. As a young girl, Miss Smith had been playmate with their children—among them Mustapha Kemal—and had taught them tennis and other English games in her father's gardens. She'd hunted with them too, killed bears with them up in the hills, shown more courage than any of them. They called her The Rose of Burnabat in

those early days, and now the sons of her father's old friends gave her the title of The Aunt of Islam.

"Of course," said Gerald Tuck, "you've heard about her pluck that day the Greek army landed at Smyrna, after the defeat of the Turks in the Great War?"

"Not a word," I told him.

He laughed and said, "Don't you read the papers?" and then agreed that I had been too busy writing chronicles elsewhere at that time of rapid history making.

There was an unresisted entry of the Greeks when their transports arrived off Smyrna. The balconies of all the Armenian houses were crowded with men and women waving handkerchiefs as the first Greek soldiers put off in boats for the landing stage, and at the open windows of the Grand Hotel Splendid Palace—what a name!—were British officers, Greek ladies, British and American correspondents, Red Cross women, and so on, all merry and bright. The Turks of Smyrna came out of their quarters, without enthusiasm—poor devils—but without fear. Some of them, the ordinary porters of the quays, helped to draw in the Greek boats. Shrill volleys of cheers and the clapping of hands resounded from all the balconies as the Greeks landed. Then, before the eyes of excited women and in the gaze of Christian children, the Greek soldiers started bayoneting the Turks and flinging their bodies into the sea. It was most deliberate and foul murder. It happened so quickly that no action could be taken by the commanders of the British and American warships lying alongside the quays. It was a little old lady who took action first—Miss Smith, who had been standing on the steps of the Grand Hotel Splendid Palace.

It was she who went down first, and alone among the murdering Greeks. She wore a white dust coat over her dress, and brown riding boots, as she had come riding into Smyrna on her old white camel, and she carried a little whip, which she slashed over the face of a Greek soldier as he advanced with a bayonet, already dripping blood, against a cowering Turk.

The little old lady called out something in Greek sharply and

harshly, and the man halted a moment, staring at her with surprised, somber eyes. But then he gave a shout, and, raising his bayonet, advanced again towards his victim. Miss Smith stood between him and the Turk. She used her whip again, and slashed the man's wrists so smartly that he gave a squeal of pain—he was only a boy—and dropped his rifle and bayonet. Miss Smith put her foot on his weapon and boxed his ears with a resounding whack, first on one side, then on the other.

A group of Turkish women and children rushed towards her and took shelter behind her, pursued by Greeks who saw red and were shouting and laughing in a beastlike way. They must have seen something in the character and spirit of Miss Smith which sobered them. She stood with the Turkish children clinging to her skirts, with one hand upraised, and though she was but a frail old woman, she seemed to have a terrific dignity at that time. She spoke to the Greeks in their own tongue, and, as Gerald Tuck said, gave them hell, so that they shrank back, ashamed. After that some Greek officers surrounded her and threatened to shoot their own men if they touched another Turk. "Pretty good for my reverend aunt, don't you think?" asked Gerald Tuck, after his narrative.

"Perfectly splendid! I would like to get a glimpse of her."

"Nothing easier," he said. "If you don't mind morning and evening prayers—she keeps up the Victorian tradition—you could put in a week with me at the old lady's place when the *Dragon* goes to Smyrna. She'd be delighted, and it would do me a bit of good to have a companion who at least has the appearance of respectability. She regards me as a limb of Satan, destined to eternal perdition."

"Another proof of your aunt's remarkable sagacity," I observed, and had to stand him another drink to make amends.

As it happened, I was first in Smyrna, and had been there a week before I met young Tuck, by chance, in the Turkish bazaars at the end of Frank Street—now a heap of cindered ruins. He looked very bright and breezy, as usual, in his white ducks and naval cap, as he sauntered through the narrow pas-

sages with vaulted roofs, where old Turks sat cross-legged in their wooden booths, selling carpets from Ouchak and Angora, dried raisins and vegetables, strips of coloured silk for Turkish dresses, Sofrali linen, Manoussa cotton, German-made hardware, and all manner of rubbish from the East and West, drenched in the aroma of spices, moist sugar, oil and camels.

What attracted my attention to young Tuck of the Royal Navy, was a sudden flutter among a group of Turkish ladies who were doing their afternoon shopping. They were very smartly dressed in frocks of blue, black and grey silk, short enough to show their neat ankles and high-heeled shoes—worthy of Paris—and their veils were drawn on one side, revealing their oval faces and large lustrous eyes, touched up, like all Turkish girls' eyes, by the black pigment of kohl.

I had glanced at them as they handled some rolls of silk in one of the booths, which a white-bearded old Turk spread out over his knees, and then I noticed one of them blush deeply and pull her veil over her face with a quick gesture. At that signal her companions veiled themselves as quickly, so that their faces were completely hidden.

I wondered what had scared the birds, and turning round I saw Gerald Tuck, who, without any doubt at all, had given the glad eye to these Oriental beauties.

"Hullo, young fellow!" I said. "You'll get into trouble if you're not more discreet with those naval optics of yours."

He grinned cheerily and gave me a punch in the ribs.

"Hullo, old bean! Isn't it a damn shame these little pigeons pop behind their curtains at the first sign of Christian homage? They don't give a fellow a decent chance."

The *Dragon* had come to Smyrna, and Gerald had shore leave for a week, which he proposed to put in at his aunt's place. Would I come and keep him company? Much as he admired the old lady, he confessed that a little of her went a long way.

By a coincidence which Gerald Tuck did not find in the least remarkable, we met Miss Smith that afternoon at the house of

Lieutenant Mazarakis, where I took him to tea. The boy was much taken with the children, whose pretty ways and broken English amused him vastly, and he entertained them so much by a series of conjuring tricks and other parlour games that I was quite cut out in their affection. Madame Mazarakis fell in love with the boy, in a motherly way, and confided to me that the presence of an English battleship at Smyrna gave her a sense of reassurance.

"Great Britain," she said, "is on the side of the Greeks. They will never allow the Turks to retake Smyrna. That thought gives me courage when I am most fearful."

I didn't tell the lady that I had grave doubts whether Great Britain would give any help with armed force if the Greeks could not defend their own position. England, after her exhaustion in the Great War, was all for peace, and could not afford either money or men for any conflict in the Near East.

It was after that conversation that Gerald Tuck gave an exclamation of surprise:

"By all that's wonderful, there's my sacred aunt!"

Through the window looking onto the road I saw the unusual sight of two European ladies mounted on camels, one white and one brown, preceded by an old Turk sitting on the rump of a little grey donkey. They all halted at the gate, and the Turk, getting off his donkey, helped one of the ladies to dismount from the white camel. She was a little old lady in a long white dust coat, carrying a parasol of black silk with a long fringe, and I knew at once that this must be Miss Smith of Smyrna.

The excitement of the Mazarakis children, and their cry of "Mees Smeet!" proved my guess to be right.

Madame Mazarakis rose and smoothed her dress nervously.

"A visit from Miss Smith!" she said in an awed voice, as though a queen had arrived without warning.

Miss Smith advanced down the garden path, holding her parasol high—a stiff-backed little lady, with a thin, sharp-featured face, piercing grey eyes, and a most resolute look. Behind her came another lady, who had dismounted from the

brown camel—a young woman in an English-looking frock of white drill, and at first glance, and second, amazingly good-looking. Not English, certainly, but with large, liquid eyes, dark brown, as I saw later in our acquaintance, and a pale oval face with fine features of an Eastern type.

"By Jove," said Gerald Tuck, drawing in his breath, "Miss Halid has developed into a choice blossom! Last time I saw her she was a lanky kid with rat-tail hair. How these young things grow!"

"Who is Miss Halid?" I inquired.

It was not then, but afterwards, in Miss Smith's house, that he told me that this girl had been adopted by Miss Smith—the waif of some Turkish woman who had been killed in a Greek massacre. Miss Smith had found the child alive among a heap of Turkish bodies in a half-burned village among the hills beyond Burnabat, and had brought her home, where she had stayed ever since.

The old lady and this girl came into the drawing-room of Madame Mazarakis, and Miss Smith did not show the least astonishment when she was greeted by her nephew:

"Hello, aunt! Going strong, I hope? I see you still ride the old white camel, like a lady in a circus!"

She gave him her cheek to kiss, and though she spoke severely, had a glint of humour in her keen grey eyes:

"Well, Gerald, I see your manners haven't improved since we last met. As for your morals, no doubt the least said the better. In the navy there are more souls lost than drowned."

This epigram made young Gerald laugh boisterously, at the end of which ebullition of high spirits he introduced me as his very particular pal.

The old lady gave me her little wrinkled, gipsy-like hand, on which I noticed some handsome diamond rings.

She looked at me for a moment with her searching grey eyes, and didn't seem certain of my respectability or general character.

"What are you doing in Smyrna?" she asked, rather snap-

pishly. "Not one of Lloyd George's agents, I hope, inciting the Greeks to claim an empire which will be the ruin of 'em?"

I disclaimed all such responsibility and explained that I was a humble newspaper man, taking a look around.

"You may see more than you bargained for," she answered grimly, and then, turning away from me, poked one finger into Gerald's shoulder, and said, "You haven't said how-de-do to Halid, and the child looks as timid as a lamb in the presence of a wolf."

Gerald Tuck and the girl smiled at each other and shook hands, but for once Gerald was shy and embarrassed—he who gave the glad eye to every pretty girl whom he met on his way through the world! I think he was rather overwhelmed by the remarkable beauty of this young lady, whom he had remembered only as a child, on his last visit to Smyrna.

Madame Mazarakis directed a little maid to arrange the tea tray and was nervous to the point of foolishness at what she deemed to consider the immense honour of this visit from Miss Smith.

That old lady, I remember, ate an astonishing number of Greek buns, and directed most of her attention to the pretty children of our hostess, with whom she spoke in their own tongue.

At that time I saw, as I thought and think still, the immense love and tenderness of this strange old woman for these children of rival races, Greek and Turk—it was clear to me now that Miss Halid was of Turkish origin—whom she tried to protect with equal benevolence from the outrageous cruelties that threatened them in Asia Minor, where she had made her home. The hard lines of her face softened as she spoke to them and caressed the dark head of the youngest boy, while her old-maid soul shone with mother love through those grey eyes, which had seemed to me like gimlets when she had taken her measure of me.

"They're adorable, these Greek mites," she said to me presently, as the two babies sat in her lap and played with her diamond rings, fascinated by the sparkle of them. Then she

gave a deep sigh, and a moment later asked, in her queer, abrupt way, an amazing question: "Have you any bowels of compassion, young man?"

I murmured something about not having the instincts of a Nero, but she ignored my answer.

"If you have any mission as a writer, beyond sensation-mongering," she said, "you ought to do something to save another massacre of innocents."

I asked her, "What massacre?"

"Save for the mercy of God," she said solemnly, "that preposterous treaty made by the Allies with Turkey will lead to a great tragedy hereabouts."

The word "Allies" seemed to irritate her as she spoke it.

"Allies! A precious alliance between France and Great Britain—snarling at each other like cats and dogs! Up to their eyes in intrigue against each other from Syria to Constantinople!"

When she rose presently she took one of Madame Mazarakis' hands in her own and caressed it a little.

"You are a good mother, and a brave woman. But my wish for all Greek women and their little ones is for them to be far away from Smyrna."

Madame Mazarakis went white to the lips.

"My husband——" she stammered.

"Yes," said Miss Smith, "your husband believes that Greece will regain her old supremacy in Asia Minor. Tell him from me that he is a fool, like all his comrades."

She stooped to kiss the little ones, and then turned to me and gave me her hand.

"You seem honest," she said. "Come and stay with me a week, with that impudent nephew of mine. Your old bedroom is ready, Gerald."

"Excellent!" said Gerald. "Halid and I will have some tennis together."

He spoke in his usual light-hearted way, but I could see as plain as a pikestaff that he had gone all soppy under the gaze of

that strangely beautiful girl with her long-lashed eyes and Oriental grace.

Afterwards he said as much to me, when we walked back through the Turkish quarter to the Grand Hotel Splendid Palace, wedged for a while against the booths while a long caravan of brown, mangy camels, heavily laden with bales of merchandise, thrust their splay feet into the ruts and ambled past.

"Gee whiz!" he cried, thrusting back his peaked cap. "That girl Halid makes me feel like Omar Khayyam!

> "'A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
> A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
> Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
> Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!'"

He quoted the familiar old verse with an emotion that was half sham and half sincere, and was quite oblivious of the looks of hatred that came from beneath the shaggy eyebrows of five old Turks, smoking their nargiles round a little brazier by the corner of the bazaar, at this Christian dog in naval uniform with shining eyes and sonorous voice.

So, by a little thread of circumstance such as Fate weaves about the lives of men, I found myself a guest with Gerald Tuck, in the country house of Miss Smith of Smyrna, away between the hills in the village of Burnabat.

I remember the drive I took with Gerald to the old lady's place, in a cart drawn by two Anatolian ponies—sturdy little fellows with long tails like Arab steeds—because it was the first time I had seen Smyrna from the heights of the Turkish quarter above the port, and now that it is all a blackened ruin with the charred bones of Greek women and children under its fallen stones, I look back in remembrance of the beauty of that view and its semblance of peace.

We went out of the bazaar, with its crowded booths, through the street called Kallili Djadessi, to the Bridge of Caravans across the tawny river of Oued-Meles. On its steep banks were a few wooden houses, closely shuttered, and above them rose

tall cypress trees, cutting the absolute blue of the sky like black spears. Here and there beneath their shadow were Turkish graveyards with tombstones, cut at the top into the form of the fez, leaning sideways, as though tired of standing guard over the dead. A few little Turks waded in the river, down which came the warm breeze known as the *imbat*. Across the bridge passed a patrol of Greek soldiers, singing. Turkish women veiled their faces before them, and an old Turk, squatting under a wall, spat as they passed.

Dark and sombre rose Mount Pagus above us, with the fortress built on the ruins which were the palace of Alexander the Great, who founded this city in the dawn of history. But below us where all the city was outspread, the hot sunshine glowed warm on its huddled roofs of brown tiles and its whitewashed walls, while in a great curve the gulf stretched round more deeply blue than the sky above, and not less serene. The Greek gunboat *Imbros* lay at anchor there, with its metal work sparkling, and H. M. S. *Dragon*—Gerald's ship—was farther out from the shore with its guns reflected in the mirror below.

"Rum old place!" said Gerald, gazing at the scene. "I seem to remember something about it in my school books at Winchester."

"I'm afraid it will be mentioned in history again," I said, and at that moment I felt, in spite of the hot sunshine, a queer little chill down the spine. It was the foreboding of tragedy I had had in the house of Madame Mazarakis.

"Can't think why my remarkable old aunt likes it so much," said Gerald, yawning in a bored way. "With all her ducats, I'd take a house in civilisation, and live among people who wash now and then."

Miss Smith's house looked as though it had been transplanted from that place which Gerald had in his mind as civilisation—little old England. Outside the gates a long camel caravan had halted by a drinking well, and here, on the white, dusty road, with cypresses and minarets pointing skywards from a village below, was the old, old East, with its colour, its

silence, its smells, its mystery. But inside the gates there were lawns and flower beds, prim and neatly kept as though in Surrey, and beyond, a square-built house with a stucco front exactly like any mid-Victorian mansion built in Clapham Park for a city merchant with side whiskers and a prosperous business.

Its furniture, and the whole spirit of the place, as I saw when we entered, belonged to that period. In the hall were engravings of the British royal family, from paintings by Winterhalter, showing Queen Victoria as a young woman, and the future King Edward as an infant in arms, and the future Empress of Germany as a little girl in a white frock with long trousers.

The dining room, into which we were ushered by an elderly butler who looked as if he had just stepped out of St. James's Square, was crammed with heavy mahogony furniture and shaded from the hot light of Asia by plush curtains tied up in silk sashes exactly like those which outraged my childish sensibilities when I used to visit a great-aunt of mine, more years ago than I care to remember!

This house was in the heart of Asia Minor, but it belonged to the spirit of England of 1850, and had not changed by a hair's breadth since.

Gerald Tuck regarded it all as a great jest, and laughed boisterously at the antimacassars, or lace coverlets which hung over the backs of plush-covered chairs.

"Did you ever think you'd see such things in Smyrna?" he said. "My aunt is the most eccentric old creature since the time of Queen Elizabeth."

Whether she heard this remark I do not know, but she came into the room at that moment, and her shrewd eyes glinted with amusement at her impudent nephew, who tried to cover himself by a cheery salutation:

"Morning, aunt! Have you been for a trot on Mustapha to-day?"

Mustapha was the white camel, which Miss Smith fed every morning with devoted affection and rode every afternoon for his health's sake, and hers.

"I trust you will behave with decency and respect to my habits of life while you are a guest in my household," she answered with severity. "I am delighted to welcome you, my dear, but please remember that old age has its peculiarities and its privileges."

Life was not without its comedy in this little English oasis in the village of Burnabat, at the back of Smyrna. Gerald Tuck, with his irrestible sense of humour and high spirits, could not resist the temptation of teasing his old aunt, for whom secretly he had a real affection and admiration; and even at morning and evening prayers, which she conducted with great dignity and solemnity in the presence of the butler and two English maids—the Turkish servants and stablemen being exempt from the ceremony—he could not refrain from winking at me and making comical grimaces between his fingers.

Romance, too, was not absent from my week's sojourn in this strange household, for Gerald Tuck fell hopelessly and joyously in love with Halid, his aunt's ward, whose beauty put a spell on him and whose sentiment he awakened by his amorous pursuit—though she was as timid as a doe and as haughty as a daughter of the Sultan. The Turkish blood and character of the girl were evident in every gesture she made, in the grace of her body, in the smile of her long-lashed eyes and in the quick changes of temper that caused her to be merry and sad as the sunlight chases shadows.

Gerald made her laugh, but made her angry, too, and sometimes she fled from him across the lawn where they played tennis, and once, as he told me, he found her weeping under the cypress trees behind the house, because she thought he mocked at her.

But my remembrance of that visit to Miss Smith of Smyrna is not made up of comedy or romance, but rather is darkened by the reality of tragedy which came as a message to this house, and as a warning to the Greek people and to Europe. It was a message from Islam and the Mohammedan world, and though it was brought in friendship, it threatened massacre and all the horror of war as it is made by the Crescent against the Cross, when Turkish bayonets are greedy for Christian blood.

The messenger came one evening at dusk to the gate of Miss Smith's house. It was a young Turk, mounted on a little Arab horse, and I happened to be standing in the hall with Gerald at the open door, as his figure came riding up the drive. The young man dismounted, raised his hand to his fez, and asked in very good English whether Miss Smith was at home.

Gerald took it upon himself to answer, and I noticed that he spoke with a slight hostility.

"I'll see—if you care to wait. What name shall I give?"

The man hesitated a moment, measured Gerald with keen eyes, and then smiled.

"Tell her that the son of an old playmate craves a word with her in strictest secrecy."

"You do not care to give your name?" asked Gerald coldly.

"It is better not, if you please," answered the young Turk politely.

"Then I will not mention Ahmed Mejid Pasha," said Gerald, with what I thought was a note of irony in his voice.

The young Turk gave a slight start, and for a moment his hand went to his belt, to which a holster was strapped. Then he spoke quietly again:

"Have I the honour of your acquaintance, sir?"

"I had the pleasure of seeing you once in Constantinople," said Gerald. "You were then a prisoner of the British Mission, on a charge of conspiring against the Sultan."

"That is true," said the Turk gravely. "I had the good fortune to be liberated. I trust that, as a friend of Miss Smith, whom I regard as my second mother, you will keep my name and history secret in Smyrna?"

"Certainly," said Gerald carelessly.

"Otherwise I may be a prisoner again, in hands less friendly than the British. I come here with a message of friendship to that very dear lady, Miss Smith, whom all Turks revere."

"My aunt," said Gerald.

"Your aunt! Then, indeed, I need have no fear!"

Gerald's announcement of his relationship seemed to relieve

the young Turk of all anxiety. He saluted again, by touching his fez with the tips of his fingers above the forehead, and then his breast, which is the Turkish sign of faith.

"Come this way," said Gerald, and he led the young man to the room that Miss Smith called her study.

Before he could knock at the door the old lady opened it and stood there, looking out into the hall. At the sight of her, Ahmed Mejid Pasha gave a little cry of delight, and striding forward bent very low, and seizing Miss Smith's hands kissed them effusively. To my surprise the old lady returned this greeting and kissed the young man on both cheeks.

"My dear boy!" she said, as though it were a mother speaking to her son. "How enormously you have grown since I saw you last! But, good gracious me, that is ten years ago!"

The young Turk laughed and followed Miss Smith into her study and shut the door.

It was two hours later when the door opened again, and during that time Gerald and I, sitting in the next room, heard their voices—mostly the man's voice in what seemed like an interminable narrative, interrupted now and then by questions from Miss Smith.

Gerald gave me some clue to the man's personality and purpose.

"He's the son of old Ahmed Mejid, who was Foreign Minister of Abdul Hamid. This fellow's father was my aunt's playmate as a child in this house. Her lover afterwards, I'm told, by those who know. Queer to think of my withered old aunt inspiring passion in the heart of a Turk! This lad was up to his neck in intrigue in Constantinople, until foolishly enough he was pushed out by the British. The worst thing possible! Of course he skipped off to Angora, and now he's one of Mustapha Kemal Pasha's cavalry leaders."

"What's he doing in Smyrna?" I asked.

And Gerald's answer was, "Nothing good, you bet! But he showed pluck in coming. The Greeks would wring his neck if they caught him."

After that two hours the door of Miss Smith's study opened again and we heard their voices in the hall. They spoke all but a few words in Turkish, and then I heard Miss Smith say good-bye in English.

"Good-bye, dear lady," answered the young Turk.

For a moment there was silence. Perhaps he kissed the old woman's hand again. Then she spoke once more, with painful emotion:

"Ahmed—for your father's sake—and he was chivalrous—be merciful in the hour of victory, if that should be yours. My God and yours—our same Eternal Father—hates those who are without compassion for helpless women and little children and those who are defenseless. There has been too much blood and agony in Asia Minor, and the cry of murdered children reaches to the ears of Allah in whom you have faith."

Some such words as these she spoke, though not perhaps, exactly as I have written.

The man answered with equal emotion:

"Mustapha Kemal Pasha is a noble leader, dear lady. He will restrain his followers, so far as human nature allows. Alas, that is not far! For if the Greeks pillage and murder in their usual way, the swords of our men will be hungry for vengeance. It is that I fear."

A few minutes later there was the clip-clop of hoofs down the carriage drive to the garden gate. Ahmed Mejid Pasha came in the dusk and went in darkness.

That night at dinner Miss Smith looked very old and very grey. Not once did she speak of her visitor, but towards the end of the meal she brightened a little, for the sake, I think, of the girl Halid, who glanced at her anxiously from time to time. She told little anecdotes of her early days, when she had gone hunting in the hills, and then spoke of her children—Greeks and Turks—for whom she had founded schools in Smyrna, and whom she loved without prejudice of race or creed.

Later, when Miss Halid had gone to bed, the old lady summoned Gerald and myself to her study.

I remember her now, as she sat in a high-backed chair, looking very tiny and frail, yet with a spiritual strength in her keen, sharp-featured face.

"My dear," she said, "you know I had a visit to-day from the son of an old friend. He tells me, Gerald, that you know his name and rank, and trusts to your honour and mine not to mention it beyond this house."

Gerald said, "Righto, aunt!" and with that she was satisfied, as indeed she might be, knowing the honest character of the boy.

"He came with a message," said Miss Smith; and for a moment her face twitched with an expression of pain.

"What message?" asked Gerald, and for once he spoke gravely.

The old woman searched him with her eyes, as though wondering how far she might trust him, and then seemed reassured.

"It was, of course, deeply private, though, for the sake of peace, he allows me to make use of it at my discretion. The army of Islam—of Mustapha Kemal Pasha—is ready to attack the Greeks, and is certain of victory."

Gerald gave a low whistle and sat up in his chair.

"They wish to avoid the blood and massacres that will inevitably drench this country if that happens," said Miss Smith; and again a spasm passed over her face. "There is only one means by which these horrors can be averted."

She looked at me, as though I might guess what that way might be, but I asked the word, "How?"

"By the rapid withdrawal of the Greek army from Smyrna and Thrace."

"That will never happen," I said. "There are too many interests involved, and too many passions."

That remark of mine angered her intensely. She struck the arms of her chair with both hands, and her eyes were afire as she turned them upon me.

"Too many interests involved! Yes. And too many villainies and stupidities among the powers and politicians who are running the world and condemning its innocents to death! Why

does the British Government support the Greek claim to Smyrna, which their army can never hold by their own power? Are British forces coming here to defend this unhappy population when the Greek army is routed—or before? Tell me that!"

"I'm afraid not," I said. "Our people are for peace, and sick of war."

"Then why adopt a policy which leads to war?" asked the old lady. "It is madness! Every man in the Mohammedan world will die rather than submit to Asia Minor being parcelled out among the Greeks. I have lived among them all my life. They have been good friends to me. Old woman as I am, I would have made a better peace with them than that treaty, which was botched up by politicians greedy for power and drunk with victory."

"French as well as English," I said; "pro-Turk as well as pro-Greek; Italian as well as French."

The old lady struck the arm of her chair again.

"Do not talk foolishness like that to me," she said angrily. "France and Italy and England bargained with each other for their own selfishness, forgetting the interests of millions of humble folk who wish to live in peace. Now they quarrel with each other, like thieves dissatisfied with their share of loot. Not for love of the Turk, but to get even with England, France sends arms and munitions to Mustapha Kemal. Not for love of Greece but for self-interest, or for sheer folly, England incites the Greeks in their imperialism, and both sides will betray both sides if it suits their purpose."

"You are very severe," I said. "We're not as bad as that, though I agree as to the stupidity of our politicians."

She ignored my words and continued her excited monologue.

"They call me pro-Turk," she said bitterly. "The English mission here in Smyrna call me the old Turkish woman, and suspect me of sending news to Angora, because Mustapha Kemal learned his English in this house. I am no more pro-Turk than pro-Greek! It is because I love the Greek people in Asia Minor—have I not taught them in my schools and loved their little

ones?—that I wish to save them from further massacres and a renewal of those dreadful horrors that come with war. Now it is too late."

"Why too late?" asked Gerald.

"Have I not told you?" she answered. "In a few weeks Mustapha Kemal will advance with his army. He is a great general, and more of a soldier than that fat old man who sits in the Greek headquarters, ignorant and vain and futile."

"The Greeks can put up a good scrap," said Gerald. "They may knock hell out of old man Turk."

"Don't be a fool, child!" said Miss Smith.

"Sorry, aunt!" said Gerald with great cheerfulness, and he winked at me.

The old lady seemed to be thinking very deeply. She sat silent for quite a while, with her little wrinkled hands playing with some jet beads on her dress.

"There's one man who might listen to me, and act in time," she said at last. "He's a fool, of course, but not quite such a fool as he's painted."

"Who's that?" asked Gerald.

"Constantine."

"Tino? That blighter?"

The old lady nodded and said, "He's got courage, and is obstinate in his decisions. He might listen to me and avert the disaster that is coming."

She rose from her chair and walked nervously up and down the room with quick little steps, while Gerald watched her curiously, puffing at a cigarette.

Presently she stopped and spoke to us again.

"Yes, it's my duty. I'll go and see the king of Athens. I will tell him what I know. I may be the messenger of God's mercy."

"My dear aunt," said Gerald, sitting up and throwing away his cigarette. "You'll probably catch your death of cold on the boat and do no good whatever at the end of the journey. My advice to you is to sit tight here. Even if the Turks do advance they won't hurt you."

"They'll hurt my little ones," said the old lady. "In peace the Turk is a good man. In war he has no pity for man, woman or child."

Nothing would divert the old lady from this idea in her head—a journey to Athens, to warn the king of coming danger and defeat.

It was not my place to dissuade her, and Gerald's advice was ignored as though a child spoke.

It was for his sake as well as out of admiration for an old woman's pluck that I offered to accompany her to Athens on my way back to England.

I think she was glad of that offer, and the little help I could give her in the way of carrying her handbag to the boat.

"I shall be back within a week, my dear," she told the girl Halid, whom she embraced tenderly. "You will be safe here in this old house with my faithful servants."

The girl wept bitterly at parting with the old lady, but I think some of her tears were for Gerald, who was returning with us to his ship. They had a little love passage in the garden, I think, and Gerald told me afterwards that he had kissed the girl, and promised to come back to her.

All the servants, Turks and English, gathered round that carriage drawn by two Anatolian ponies before we drove off and the old white camel, Mustapha, snuffled and stamped as though indignant that his beloved mistress should travel without him.

"Be a good boy!" she called out to this hideous beast.

At the gateway Gerald and I turned in the carriage to wave our hands to Miss Halid, who stood there weeping, and yet laughing a little because of Gerald's ardent demonstration with his naval cap. It was the last time I saw Miss Smith's stucco-fronted house and her smooth lawns and flower beds—this English oasis in Asia Minor. No eyes will ever see it again, for the house is a black ruin of charred timbers and brick, and the flower beds were trampled into mud by Turkish cavalry.

On the way through Smyrna, I was astonished by the royal

progress of the old lady. Certainly she had the love of this people. Turkish women came to the doors to raise their hands as she passed, and little Turkish children ran alongside the carriage for a way with shouts of "Mees Smeet! Mees Smeet!" It was the same in the Armenian and Greek quarters, where the children were coming out of school—some of the schools she had founded for them, and maintained at her own cost. They greeted her appearance with shrill cheers, and one pretty girl threw into her carriage a handful of flowers she had plucked from some garden. Miss Smith turned to me once and put her hand on mine.

"I would give my old life to save these little ones," she said. "Perhaps God will bless my journey's end."

If I remember rightly, it was a voyage of sixteen hours to Athens, in a little boat that had once been the steam yacht of Vanderbilt and was now converted into a passenger ship and named the *Polikos*. It was vastly overcrowded with Greek officers and men, a group of Italian soldiers and a number of Israelites. I managed to secure a cabin for Miss Smith, and had a berth for myself amidships, with Greek officers above and below, violently and emotionally sick when the sea rose after dusk and made the boat pitch in a most unpleasant way.

At Athens the old lady and I put up at the Grande Bretagne, a very beautiful hotel, not far from the king's palace.

That very morning, with indomitable energy, the old lady, who had passed a sleepless night, as she told me, drove in a hired motor car to the palace; and I think I see her now, as she sat there, under a black parasol, with the hot sun of Athens pouring into the car and dazzling so fiercely upon the white marble-fronted houses that it was painful to the eyes. She looked to me like a little old queen, and it was with the dignity of such that she bowed to some Greek officers who passed and saluted her.

"My dear," she said to me, "if you were not a journalist, I should ask you to pray for me now. I go to a meeting which may save the lives of thousands of poor, simple folks, and innocent little children. There is at least the chance of a miracle."

Not more than that, I thought; and miracles, alas, have not been frequent of late.

And yet I think I said something like a prayer for the old woman as I walked through the king's gardens—open to the public in part—and then sat on the terrace of an open-air café looking towards Mount Hymettus, where once Homer lay and listened to the bees, and to the ruin of the Acropolis, where the sunlight fell upon the amber-tinted pillars of the Parthenon, and the temple of Athena, under a cloudless sky of fathomless blue, as when Euripides described the Athenians of old "marching through an ether of surpassing brightness."

Some Greek schoolboys went singing towards the white arena where, three thousand years ago, other boys of their race threw the discus, as they were going to do, for some contest between their schools. In white vests and shorts, their necks and arms and legs were burnt the colour of terra cotta, and in their beauty of youth they were not unworthy of those young athletes whose forms were carved in marble by a master hand, for the world's delight.

Sitting there, in this scene where all the glory of Greek history had passed, where those very stones around had been worn by the feet of men who gave the grace of art to life, and a philosophy to which we still turn for wisdom, I was moved by the thought of the tragedy that seemed to be coming swiftly to the modern Greeks and was filled with pity for the wreck of their illusions, hopes, ambitions, sacrifice. They had gone back to Asia Minor, lured by the old tradition of Greek empire, finding old stones as its proof in history, and remnants of their people. They had looked with greedy eyes toward Constantinople, in which they had founded the Byzantine Empire as a bulwark of Christendom against the infidel. There was an old prophecy that Constantine would come back there, that the Mass of the Greek Church would be resumed in San Sofia, from the point where it had broken off with a cry of terror when Mohammed II rode in with his Turks and slew until the walls were splashed with blood. It was that legend of the coming back of Constan-

tine which had uplifted the Greek people and inspired their army. Now an old woman was with the king in whom their hopes were centred, telling him, perhaps, that defeat was certain, and that to save his people from massacre he must surrender their claims!

Strange episode of history! Fantastic that an old lady named Miss Smith should go on such a mission! Incredible in its absurdity, when one believed, as I did, and do now, that Miss Smith of Smyrna, this shrewd old maid, beloved by Turks and Greeks alike, had received a message of fate from Mustapha Kemal Pasha, and knew the truth of it.

I saw her coming out of the king's garden in her hired motor car. She sat with her hands clasped in her lap, and her head bent.

I held up my hand to stop the car, and took a seat beside her. "What news?" I asked.

She put her hand on mine with that little gesture which was a habit with her.

"I have failed," she said simply. "They jeered at me as a mad old woman."

Presently she told me that she had given way to anger. She had threatened those who jeered with a tragedy that would make them weep blood for their folly. She had told Constantine that his crown was worth no more than a jester's cap and damned him as the assassin of his race. They had turned her out, as an old lunatic.

"Now I go back to Smyrna," she said, "to await the red flame that will rise before the flag of Islam."

I tried to persuade her to stay in Athens a while, but she spoke of Halid, her best beloved, and of the children who believed in her as a protectress.

"Because once I stopped a massacre of Turks," she said, "they may listen to an old woman when she prays for mercy on the Greeks."

That very night, without rest, the old lady embarked again for Smyrna, and I shall not see her again in this life.

The attack by Mustapha Kemal began three weeks to the day after her return, and the whole world knows the tragedy of Smyrna, the burning of that fair city, the driving of Christians into its hungry flames, the bayoneting of women and children, the cry of agony that went out to sea above the roar of fire, and was heard by naval men watching from their ships.

Gerald Tuck was there, on the *Dragon*, and knew that somewhere in that hell was the old lady, his aunt, and the young girl whose beauty had put a spell on him.

From an American Red Cross worker I heard of Miss Smith in her last hour. She had come down into Smyrna with Miss Halid and stayed with the Greek children and teachers of one of her schools. When the first squadron of Turkish cavalry rode down the quay side she went out to meet them and spoke to the commander, who was Ahmed Mejid Pasha. He bent down over his saddle and spoke to her gently.

It was not the regular cavalry that began the massacre, but the irregulars who came with them. The leaders tried to restrain their men, but could do nothing when their madness began.

Among the houses that went up in flames was that of Lieutenant Mazarakis, where I had taken tea so often with a woman who was afraid, and children who sang to me.

It is certain that Miss Smith of Smyrna died in the fire of her schoolhouse, where many little ones of Greece whom she had tried to save went with her, as I verily believe, to that great peace where no cruelty of men may enter in.

ERNEST POOLE

Novelist, short-story writer

Mr. Poole has been a student of social conditions, especially in New York, since he was graduated from Princeton. During 1914–1915, he was a war correspondent in France and Germany. Later, in the interests of socialism, he went to Russia after its Revolution. Like a true reporter, he has written of his experiences. Here we are interested in his use of material in the short-story.

"Although I don't like to preach, as a rule, I am glad at least to bear witness to your students as to the value of learning how to write. I know that composition work seems often uninteresting at school. It did to me, and I did little work. Later at Princeton I did make an honest effort to learn how to write. I wrote for the college daily—the monthly—and I wrote two plays besides and quite a few short stories—and threw most of them away. My friends rather smiled at me. But twenty years later at our reunion I wish you might have heard some of those men—doctors, lawyers, business men—tell me how they kicked themselves for not having, while at college, used the chance to learn how to get their thoughts clearly and forcibly down on paper. For a man in any active life, or a woman either, needs to be able to put his thoughts over, clear and strong, either in writing or in speech. And don't forget that when you have learned to express yourself clearly on paper,

you've gone a long way toward expression in speech—to individuals or to crowds, large or small—to committees of all kinds, to business conventions, jurors in courts, political meetings, et cetera. So much for the value of clear self-expression in business or professional life.

"But I cannot close without an appeal for writing alone, for its own sake—as a job to be learned as a life work. I've been at it for over twenty years. I remember the hundreds of days and nights of hard labor it cost—but I can remember, too, the delights that it brought, and the widening views and the deepening insight into people. I remember big strikes out in the West, and a War and two Revolutions abroad, in which I was a correspondent. I remember three exciting times rehearsing plays of mine, here in New York. I remember the glow and grip that comes with the growth of a novel in one's mind. So I say to you, it was worth all the pains—and I feel as though I'd just begun—and I only wish I'd worked a thousand times harder and better, from the start. And in closing—once more I repeat:—No matter what you can do, it's worth your while to learn to write!

"You ask for one of my best bits of writing. One, I should say, is my last book, *The Avalanche*—chapter three or four or five—describing a talk between a physician and a priest. Perhaps more in line with what you want would be my short story, 'The Little Dark Man.'"

—Ernest Poole.

THE LITTLE DARK MAN[1]

"I am going to tell you a story," said my Russian friend on another night, "which will give you a glimpse of the little dark man whose figure will soon be more plainly seen in many countries of the world. And then he will look quite enormously large—even in America."

My curiosity was stirred. When I asked what he meant by the little dark man, he smiled at me and answered:—

"If I should try to tell you, I would be talking all the night, for this chap has appeared in so many forms, since men began asking 'What is the life?' In the Middle Ages he grew quite large and they called him Saint or Sorcerer. Then came modern science and smiled at him; and as men smiled he grew small to their eyes, so small that soon those scientists forgot him—like God, whom they also denied. But now I think he will grow again. So large will he grow at the end of this war that soon you will hear the millions of greatly puzzled people inquire, 'Who is this psychic gentleman? He is doing the strange things. How does he do them?' they will ask. And the orthodox atheist, sharply annoyed, will have to find some way to reply. . . . But all this time while he was so dim, to those learned people in the towns, to the simple peasants of our land he has always been quite real. And my story to-night is of such peasants, and of one who lived among them, and of a thing that I saw with my eyes. So now I shall tell—and at first you will hear a story beginning not strangely at all, but just very human, very Russian."

He smiled again, and so began. And the tale that he told I shall try to repeat in his own words, as he told it to me.

[1] From *The Little Dark Man, and Other Russian Sketches*. Reprinted by permission of The Macmillan Company.

"Surely we shall be too late! Make haste, go on!" my mother cried, although it was more than five hours yet before the train to Petrograd could possibly reach the station to which we were driving. For my mother always loved to be "a little before" a train. In all our trips, though I did my best to be as slow as possible, never could I manage so that we reached the station less than some two hours before the arrival of the train. And knowing this, our peasant driver only smiled when she implored him to be going like the wind.

"Barina," he said, "we shall have three hours still to wait, if the train is not late. But God only knows how late it will be. The last time it was fully six hours behind; so perhaps you will sit at the station all through the day and through the night."

"Go on—oh, please!" my poor mother cried. So with an indignant grunt, the peasant beat his horses to the splendid gallop; and so we were going until at last we stopped with a jerk in the mud and snow before the gate to the station yard. "Thank God, now we are in time!" declared my mother with content, while I went into the station to inquire about the train. Never in all my life have I heard of any train so far behind! Somewhere in Holy Russia, it was, and this was all that I could learn. Many hours at least we should be here. I was in the despair, which was still increased when soon I found that the station buffet was hopelessly closed. The whole place was filled with emptiness!

I strolled upon the platform then, and at last discovered at one end a single living creature there—a blond and tall, quite nicely built young peasant woman, cleanly dressed, who sat immovable, calm like a cow. It seemed to me I had seen her before; but where, at first I could not guess. Then suddenly I recollected. Yes, this was the nice young woman I met not long ago on my way to Okuneff's, a neighbor of mine whose small estate was about fifty versts from our home. I had talked with her then, so I had learned that she was from the village of Bor; and now I was glad that I had discovered someone with whom my good mother could talk, since I knew that she did not

like to be mute for any considerable length of time. So I brought the girl to her and said that here was a nice young woman from Bor. One glance of the keen pleased interest, and my mother knew at once that this young woman would soon have a child. So with full speed the gossip began; and in perhaps two hours, with never any silence at all, we knew all about this woman's life—not only her name, but the names of all her relatives and all her friends, and all their lives from year to year, as though we ourselves were born in Bor. And only when she had recounted all this, did Maria quietly tell to us how early this morning she had come there, and already was on the train when off she ran to the buffet to fetch some hot water for her tea. The train went off while she was there—and her luggage was now in Petrograd! At once my mother, in full dismay, was convinced it would be stolen there; but the girl Maria quite calmly replied:

"No, Barina, such a thing cannot be. Do you see? I am poor and with child, and my husband is sick from a wound in the war. Will he live or not, God only knows. So how could there be any people so bad, who would steal from such a girl as me, who goes to see her husband in Petrograd where he may die?"

But my good mother's concern increased. Earnestly turning to me, she implored, "Junechka, please—explain to her that there *are* such people in Petrograd—that the luggage men are scoundrels there. Perhaps she will believe you, since you are a man."

But just because I was a man, off I walked from this hopeless talk. I walked and walked, the time went on, and at last arrived the train in the night.

By now my anxious mother resolved to take the girl with us, second class, since she had learned that Maria knew nobody in Petrograd except her husband, Peter, who was in a lazaret. On the train she gave us a letter from him—a most typical one—many peasants write so:—

"To our deeply esteemed wife, Maria Sidorovna, we send our greetings of the husband. I am ill in Petrograd in the lazaret N. 423, so please come quickly to me there. Give our greetings

to ———" and then followed the names of all the relatives, friends, and persons of village acquaintance, placed in the hierarchical order.

The letter at last was finished:

"And pray to accept our blessings of the husband for your good success—which blessing is good until the coffin."

In the station at Petrograd, where we arrived at the end of the night, I found at last the conductor of the early morning train, and soon, to my enormous surprise, the luggage of the girl was found. When he brought to Maria her huge bag, she took it without astonishment, quite calmly as a matter of course. "Surely," he said with the curious smile, "you must be a girl from the North, where the people live without locks on their doors!" I paid the man five roubles for the trouble he took not to steal the bag, and then my mother asked Maria to come along with us that day and be safe from all the scoundrels. Without confusion the girl replied, "Thanks." And she quietly climbed into the sledge.

It was now early in the dawn, but as we passed so many great houses, palaces, and God knows what, Maria looked calmly at them all and showed not even the small surprise, though never once yet in her life had she visited any town, and the only stone building she had seen was the little church in Bor, which was some seven centuries old. "This is a town. Then it must be so," was the thought in her eyes, and nothing else. Like the splendid healthy ox she was! When we came to our lodging, Maria at once felt herself here quite at home, as though she had been years long with us. While eating some bread and sipping the tea, she now continued to us her tale. Her husband, she told, had been a soldier already for two years in the war. They had taken him off when he was eighteen. All the time near Riga he had been, digging many trenches there, "so that men could be saved from the bullets," she said. Eight months ago, he was with her in Bor for a few days; then away he went—and not until now had she received any news of him.

Then, while I went to the telephone to ask the address of the lazaret, Maria was carefully making herself fit for her great visit that day—"to my deeply esteemed husband," she said. She displayed before my mother the contents of her enormous bag. It was quite a museum of village fine art—the laces made with needles so fine, and with such perfect taste, that they could easily compare with that coming from Venice, my mother declared. Then came the fine and silk-like linen, spun in the home, some snowy white and some with faded green and pink woven into it in such a way, and with a feeling of color so fine, that it was quite a wonder to see! My mother's good eyes came out of her head! With dry reproach she looked at me, and said,—

"You have been many times to Bor! Were you always sleeping there, that you never saw such needlework, to buy some and to bring to me? This is exactly the way of a man!"

My position grew most unpleasant now. My God! And in order to save myself, I made the heroic proposition to make a special journey to Bor at once and fetch all the stuff I could buy.

While I was telling this splendid resolve, Maria at last was ready to start—quite in her best attire now, with her fair thick hair all shined with oil and tightly coiffed. "My own husband I am going to see, so I must be at my best," she said. Our *dvornik* fetched for her a sledge, and off on the dirty snow of the street she drove away to the lazaret.

In about two hours back she came—quite terribly silent, with not a trace of the calm animation she had shown when she was preparing herself for the visit. She sat a long time so deeply sad that it was a woe to look at her. Her husband was so ill, she said, the doctors even did not allow him to speak any word with his own wife. On the train from the front, I soon understood, the poor devil had caught a pneumonia, and now there was faint hope he could survive. Two-thirds of his lungs did not breathe, she told us. Still not a tear, nor any complaint. Silently she took off her fine clothes. She asked of my mother, "Where is the church?" And off she went to pray to the God.

Now I telephoned to the lazaret to find if nothing could be

done; but they told me her husband was ill quite long, and was weak before the pneumonia came. Now he lived only by breathing the pure oxygen from the tank. No hope at all. Perhaps two days would be the longest time for him. . . . Well, poor lad—another one dead. But death was so common in Russia now, that soon I dropped him off my mind, and went to attend to the business for which I had come to Petrograd. I accomplished it that afternoon; then, having nothing urgent to do, in order to please my mother I decided to go back to Bor and buy some linen and laces there, and also perhaps have a nice long chat with my friend Okuneff, who lived near by.

So I took the train from the city that night; and the next day, after quite a long drive over the clean white snow of a road through the silent forest of huge pines, I came to the little village which was the girl Maria's home. Soon I discovered the hut where she lived, and found her younger sister there. She was a lass of perhaps sixteen, a nice-looking girl with brown-golden eyes, thick chestnut hair, and finely built—but silent, silent like a fish. I explained to her the bad news about Peter, and also why I had come to Bor; and of course I mentioned that I was going to see my old friend Okuneff near by. This was to make my credit higher—since no peasant likes to sell or have trade with a person unknown to him.

The girl had listened silently both to the news of Peter and also to my business talk; but now, when I said I would go to Okuneff, without any word she went from the hut and soon returned with a neighbor woman, to whom she explained what had to be done, while she was away from the home that day. "Well, my swallow, well, my birdie, I will do so," the neighbor agreed.

When the compact was made, and not before, did the young girl calmly ask of me if she might go in my sledge to Okuneff's.

"There is plenty of room, you see, and I will take but small space," she said. "And if Peter is so ill, I must go at once to a very old man who is living now in the house of your friend, the Barin Okuneff. So please to make for me this grace."

Of course I agreed, and we started away. We traveled about

twenty versts, and this girl at my side was silent still as any fish could possibly be. I learned her name, Pelageia—but not another word from her could I draw out along the road. In the concentrated way she sat, as if she thought of something.

What it was I did not know—and as I looked at her I guessed that not even she herself knew her thoughts. So at last we came to Okuneff's estate. Exceedingly glad to see me there, at once in his stentorian voice he cried:—

"Juvenal Vassilievich arrived! Now make for us a big fishpie! Be quick as possible! Don't forget to serve the nice *zakooski*, too!"

And then followed the further orders which he shouted from his room down to the kitchen far below.

That was a splendid feast we had. With the appetites of heroes we consumed appalling heaps of food. After dinner we slept a bit—about two hours—and when again I came into the front room of the house, I saw the girl Pelageia there, sitting with a little old man who was dressed in the black garb of a monk. He was wiry, thin, and quite white-haired; but he had the strong, determined face, and a tremendous force was felt both in his voice and in his eyes—though his manner was quite humble and his speech very low. The girl must have been telling him about Maria's husband; for when I entered, the little old man rose and greeted me, and began to ask intently in detail what I had heard from the doctors about Peter's hopeless case. When I had explained, he asked as well all about the lazaret—just where it was in Petrograd, how large, how many rooms it had, and just where was Peter's bed. He inquired as though he himself were intending to go and see the sick man there. When all this information he had, he thanked me and rose and went to his room.

Then I asked my friend Okuneff who was this little holy man? He answered me that now for some time the old fellow had lived within his house, and that he was glad to have him there—so quiet and good he always was, so little trouble did he make. He stayed most of the time alone in his room, and his

meals were the water and the rye bread—only rarely a dish of sauerkraut with sunflower oil, which he took as a feast. The strange healing-power he sometimes had; many peasants had been cured by him. So much for his case. With Okuneff I soon forgot about him now, and all evening long we talked of the war—of prices, how they rose and rose; and of new laws by the government, each one more stupid than the last—or not so stupid, rather done by the German influence at court, to bring all our trade and industries down. So, after this good cheerful talk, which most Russians like so well, finally we went to bed.

The next day, when leaving Okuneff's house, I saw the old man of the night before. He said, in the low and quiet voice, "I attended to the trouble of Peter, and I received news that now all will go well."

I smiled to myself. For how could such a simple old man travel six hundred versts in a night to the lazaret where Peter lay? I went into my sledge with Pelageia, and we started back to Bor. Though she had heard what the old man said, she took it quite as a matter of course. She was rather communicative now, and explained to me that it would be hard to buy the linen and laces in Bor; for the women did not like to sell except in the cases exceedingly rare. Too much toil their stuff had cost. But still she would try to persuade them to sell to me something, if only a little. Very calmly on she talked. Long ago some merchants had bought the lace in Bor, she said, but could not sell it in the big towns, because the ladies there preferred to buy the laces foreign-made. "For to them it was the shocking taste to wear anything made in Russia!" she said. So now her friends and neighbors in Bor were quite indignant that their fine work should be refused for the bad lace made with machines in Germany; Pelageia spoke of those ladies in towns, most heartily despising them all! "No self-respecting Barina," she said, "would wear such trash from Germany!"

But about the little old man she did not say a single word. And when I asked if she thought he would help, the girl replied, "It is not a good thing to speak of the *Starzy* (Holy Man)."

In Bor, through her aid, I bought what I could. Of all the money which I had I spared only enough for the ticket—third class—and so I went back to Petrograd. But when I arrived with my linen and laces, I found the girl Maria still there; and to my enormously great chagrin, my mother would barely look at this stuff! Instead, she began to tell me now of a most strange adventure which they have had while I was gone. A little old man, in the garb of a monk or of a pilgrim, came to them. Though all the doors were closed, she told, without trouble or sound he entered silently into the room where they were sitting; and after greeting Maria, he said, "I have been to your Peter and talked with him, and have found that now he will soon be quite well."

Then quickly and strangely he went away. . . . While my mother told this tale, I saw the girl Maria looking intently at my face, as if she were asking, "And what do *you* know?" But I told them nothing yet of the man that I had seen at Okuneff's house. In the great interest and surprise I began to question both of them, and soon they were disagreeing as to many small details—just how he looked, just what he said. But the general story was the same. The next morning, they told me, they went to see Peter.

"And really, Junechka, the boy was much better!" my excited mother declared. "He breathed quite well without oxygen now—but still was too weak to say anything more than that he had seen an old man there—and that now all would be well with him!"

With all my curiosity stirred, I went the next day to the lazaret—and there I found Peter so much improved that he could talk quite easily and listen to what I had to tell. I did not speak of the little old man; I only told how I had gone to his village and seen his wife's young sister there. With the calm interest of the peasant, Peter listened to my talk. At last I asked him how it was that he was feeling better now—and then he said very quietly:

"One came to me two nights ago."

"Who came to you? What do you mean?" I asked. "No visitors can come here in the night. Perhaps you were sleeping and had a dream."

"No, I was awake," he replied. "But I was lying in the state where you cannot say, 'Here is life—there is death'—because you can feel yourself just between. And this was very hard for me. I did not know what I should do. Should I ask for the death and pray for my soul, or should I be begging the God for my life and thinking of my family? I grew quite tired with such thoughts, and all the fighting in my chest. But I cannot say that I was asleep, for I saw all about me quite clearly and well, and I heard how the Sister beside my bed was saying, 'Look, now, how he plays with his hands, always drawing the blanket up to his chin. That is the sure sign of death.' So I lay and I listened. So quiet I grew that now it was quite the same to me, whether I lived or whether I died. She dropped her needle. I opened my eyes and watched how she stooped and tried to find it on the floor. 'Will she find it,' I asked, 'before I die?' She found it soon, and drew her chair a little closer to my bed—and now she was sewing quietly here. 'Now,' I thought, 'in this long war, she is so used to see men die. What is she sewing?' I watched her still.

"Then something pulled upon my thoughts, and I turned my face toward the door. And I saw, at first dimly, then quite clear, how there had entered a little old man in the dark robe of Holy Church, his face quite bright, a happy one, yet quiet, too, with the deep strength of joy and peace within his soul streaming from him like the light. So he came and looked at me with a good smile. 'Good day, Peter,' he said. 'You will soon be much better. I have heard that you are ill, so I have gone and inquired for you, and learned you will recover soon. You must pray to the God for recovery.' I replied to him, 'For what should I pray—when I cannot tell which is life, which is death? I am lying between.' Then he said to me, 'You must pray to the God at once for the life! You are still a young man and you have a young wife, and soon there will be a child for you, too! A fine strong boy he is going to be! What reason have you to think of

death? You are going to pray to live, my boy!' Then he told me how I should pray, and I repeated it, word by word. While I was talking, I heard the good Sister, who sat sewing still at my side, say very softly, 'Now the poor man is saying a burial prayer for himself.' I looked around to smile at her then—and when I looked back, the old man was gone.

"Then I fell asleep and slept all of the night. The next day the Sister looked at me and said, 'You were the funny man last night! Quickly you turned and began to speak with somebody who was not here! And then you began to pray to the God.' I said to the Sister, 'But did you not see the old man who came and spoke to me?' She laughed and took hold of my hand and said, 'Well, well, if there was, or there was not—do not let it trouble you! I am glad that you are better now!' Then she went and brought the doctor here; and when he came, he was much surprised. Barely could he believe his own eyes that I was not a dead man today. And he said to me, 'Peter—you are the bull! The strong and lusty bull you must be!' So said the learned doctor. But look at me, Barin, if I am the bull."

Peter drew off his blanket and opened his shirt. And he was like a skeleton very closely clad in skin!

"The Sister told to the doctor then," he continued quietly, "how I spoke with someone who was not here—though of course he was here, as I have said. She told to the doctor, too, how I prayed. Then he asked, 'How was his fever last night?' It was under the normal, the Sister replied; and she told how close I was to the death. Now the doctor understood all, and he said, 'Just so it was. The poor fellow was mad. For in such a crisis, when the soul does not know whether to stay or depart, often the man will grow quite mad, and see what is not in the room.' So I listened, and I thought, 'Now of course it must be so—for he is the very learned man. How many dead men have slipped through his hands! The great experience he has had! He must be right! So I am mad.' But soon again I fell asleep, and when I awoke I grew better still. And now I do not think I am mad—and I feel that soon I will return to my home."

He grew tired then and could talk no more. Quietly closing his eyes he said, "Tell me, please, Barin, about my home—all that you saw while you were there. Was the horse in the stable? Or has my wife been forced to sell him in this damned war?"

"Yes, the horse was there," I replied. "But now I will tell you something else." And I told how the girl Pelageia went with me to Okuneff's house, and how she was begging the old man there to pray that Peter should not die, and how the old man on the next day told that he had looked into the matter and that now all would be well. At this, Peter grew most solemnly silent; and when I had finished, he remarked.

"So—so it was. Pelageia went to the *Starzy* there. She is the good kind clever girl—she knew to whom to go for help; and now I know who it was that came. I will recover surely now."

Then he plucked at my arm; and when I bent down he whispered:—

"Only, Barin—please—do not speak of this to the doctors here! For they are the quite learned men! They can make a man die with one little pill! And if they knew what we are talking, for me it would soon be dangerously bad! For they think I am mad! They do not know! They live in such cities—so large, so large, and filled with so many learned books—that they cannot grasp our very plain and simple little village ways! So let us just slip away from them!"

Ten days later, with his wife, Peter went calmly back to his home—as though nothing strange had happened at all. We heard no more from them for a month—and then the girl Pelageia, almost as silent as before, came to our lodgings with quite a huge bag of linen and laces, which she and Maria had made for my mother, as a gift. And she told us that Maria had just given birth to a son.

SHEILA KAYE-SMITH

Novelist, short-story writer

Simplicity, truth, knowledge—these may justly be called characteristic of the style of Sheila Kaye-Smith's (Mrs. Fry's) stories. Having spent her life in Sussex, she is concerned, as Hardy was with Wessex, with the portrayal of the people and country about her. Her stories are simply told, but there is a vigor about them that speaks of the ruggedness of her characters and their environment. She tells about them with the truth that shows a breadth of knowledge and that is convincing. Like Hardy, also, she emphasizes the influence of environment upon character, but not always with his insistence on inevitable tragedy. Life is tragic, but it is also very good—never sentimentally good.

The last paragraph of Mrs. Fry's letter would indicate that she preaches what she practices:

"The only classical authors I really enjoy are Jane Austen and Fielding, for the simple reason probably that I had nothing to do with them when I was in school.

"Among modern writers I would recommend to your students May Sinclair, Rose Macaulay, Compton Mackenzie, and P. G. Wodehouse.

"I think that one of the greatest encouragements to good writing is clear thinking, and the limiting of self-expression simply to saying what one means as briefly and clearly as possible."

—Sheila Fry (Sheila Kaye-Smith).

MRS. ADIS [1]

In North-East Sussex a great tongue of land runs into Kent by Scotney Castle. It is a land of woods—the old hammer woods of the Sussex iron industry—and among the woods gleam the hammer-ponds, holding in their mirrors the sunsets and sunrises. Owing to the thickness of the woods—great masses of oak and beech in a dense undergrowth of hazel and chestnut and frail sallow—the road that passes Mrs. Adis's cottage is dark before the twilight has crept away from the fields beyond. That night there was no twilight and no moon, only a few pricks of fire in the black sky above the trees. But what the darkness hid the silence revealed. In the absolute stillness of the night, windless and clear with the first frost of October, every sound was distinct, intensified. The distant bark of a dog at Delmonden sounded close at hand, and the man who walked on the road could hear the echo of his own footsteps following him like a knell.

Every now and then he made an effort to go more quietly, but the roadside was a mass of brambles, and their crackling and rustling were nearly as loud as the thud of his feet on the marl. Besides, they made him go slowly, and he had no time for that.

When he came to Mrs. Adis's cottage he paused a moment. Only a small patch of grass lay between it and the road. He went stealthily across it and looked in at the lighted, uncurtained window. He could see Mrs. Adis stooping over the fire, taking some pot or kettle off it. He hesitated and seemed to wonder. He was a big, hulking man, with reddish hair and freckled face, evidently of the laboring class, but not successful, judging by the vague grime and poverty of his appearance. For

[1] Reprinted from *Joanna Godden Married* by special permission of the author.

a moment he made as if he would open the window, then he changed his mind and went to the door instead.

He did not knock, but walked straight in. The woman at the fire turned quickly round.

"What, you, Peter Crouch?" she said. "I didn't hear you knock."

"I didn't knock, ma'am. I didn't want anybody to hear."

"How's that?"

"I'm in trouble." His hands were shaking a little.

"What you done?"

"I shot a man, Mrs. Adis."

"You?"

"Yes,—I shot him."

"You killed him?"

"I dunno."

For a moment there was silence in the small, stuffy kitchen. Then the kettle boiled over and Mrs. Adis sprang for it, mechanically putting it at the side of the fire.

She was a small, frail-looking woman, with a brown, hard face on which the skin had dried in innumerable small, hair-like wrinkles. She was probably not more than forty-two; but life treats some women hard in the agricultural districts of Sussex, and Mrs. Adis's life had been harder than most.

"What do you want me to do for you, Peter Crouch?" she said, a little sourly.

"Let me stay here a bit. Is there nowhere you can put me till they've gone?"

"Who's they?"

"The keepers."

"Oh, you've had a shine with the keepers, have you?"

"Yes, I was down by Cinder Wood seeing if I could pick up anything, and the keepers found me. There was four to one, so I used my gun. Then I ran for it. They're after me; reckon they aren't far off now."

Mrs. Adis did not speak for a moment.

Crouch looked at her searchingly, beseechingly.

"You might do it for Tom's sake," he said.

"You haven't been an over-good friend to Tom," snapped Mrs. Adis.

"But Tom's been an unaccountable good friend to me; reckon he would want you to stand by me to-night."

"Well, I won't say he wouldn't, seeing as Tom always thought better of you than you deserved. Maybe you can stay till he comes home to-night, then we can hear what he says about it."

"That'll serve my turn, I reckon. He'll be up at Ironlatch for an hour yet, and the coast will be clear by then. I can get away out of the country."

"Where'll you go?"

"I dunno. There's time to think of that."

"Well, you can think of it in here," she said, dryly, opening a door which led from the kitchen into the small lean-to of the cottage. "They'll never guess you're there, specially if I tell them I ain't seen you to-night."

"You're a good woman, Mrs. Adis. I know I'm not worth your standing by me, but maybe I'd ha' been different if I'd had a mother like Tom's."

She did not speak, but shut the door, and he was in darkness save for a small ray of light that filtered through one of the cracks. By this light he could see her moving to and fro, preparing Tom's supper. In another hour Tom would be home from Ironlatch Farm, where he worked every day. Peter Crouch trusted Tom not to revoke his mother's kindness, for they had been friends when they went together to the National School at Lamberhurst, and since then the friendship had not been broken by their very different characters and careers.

Peter Crouch huddled down upon the sacks that filled one corner of the lean-to and gave himself up to the dreary and anxious game of waiting. A delicious smell of cooking began to filter through the kitchen, and he hoped Mrs. Adis would not deny him a share of the supper when Tom came home, for he was very hungry and he had a long way to go.

He had fallen into a kind of helpless doze, haunted by the memories of the last two hours, re-cast in the form of dreams, when he was roused by the sound of footsteps on the road.

For a moment his poor heart nearly choked him with its beating. They were the keepers. They had guessed for a cert. where he was—with Mrs. Adis, his old pal's mother. He had been a fool to come to the cottage. Nearly losing his self-control, he shrank into the corner shivering, half-sobbing. But the footsteps went by. They did not even hesitate at the door. He heard them ring away into the frosty stillness. The next minute Mrs. Adis stuck her head into the lean-to.

"That was them," she said, shortly. "A party from the Castle. I saw them go by. They had lanterns, and I saw old Crotch and the two Boormans. Maybe it ud be better if you slipped out now and went towards Cansiron. You'd miss them that way and get over to Kent. There's a London train comes from Tunbridge Wells at ten to-night."

"That'd be a fine thing for me, ma'am, but I haven't the price of a ticket on me."

She went to one of the kitchen drawers. "Here's seven shillun'; it'll be your fare to London and a bit over."

For a moment he did not speak, then he said, "I don't know how to thank you, ma'am."

"Oh, you needn't thank me. I am doing it for Tom. I know how unaccountable set he is on you and always was."

"I hope you won't get into trouble because of this."

"There ain't much fear. No one's ever likely to know you've been in this cottage. That's why I'd sooner you went before Tom came back, for maybe he'd bring a pal with him, and that'd make trouble. I won't say I shan't have it on my conscience for having helped you to escape the law, but shooting a keeper ain't the same as shooting an ordinary sort of man, as we all know, and maybe he ain't so much the worse, so I won't think no more about it."

She opened the door for him, but on the threshold they both

stood still, for again footsteps could be heard approaching, this time from the far south.

"Maybe it's Tom," said Mrs. Adis.

"There's more than one man there, and I can hear voices."

"You'd better go back," she said, shortly. "Wait till they've passed, anyway."

With an unwilling shrug he went back into the little dusty lean-to, which he had come to hate, and she shut the door upon him.

The footsteps drew nearer. They came more slowly and heavily this time. For a moment he thought they would pass also, but their momentary dulling was only the crossing of the strip of grass outside the door. The next minute there was a knock. It was not Tom, then.

Trembling with anxiety and curiosity, Peter Crouch put his eye to one of the numerous cracks in the lean-to door and looked through into the kitchen. He saw Mrs. Adis go to the cottage door, but before she could open it a man came quickly in and shut it behind him.

Crouch recognized Vidler, one of the keepers of Scotney Castle, and he felt his hands and feet grow leaden cold. They knew where he was, then. They had followed him. They had guessed that he had taken refuge with Mrs. Adis. It was all up. He was not really hidden; there was no place for him to hide. Directly they opened the inner door they would see him. Why couldn't he think of things better? Why wasn't he cleverer at looking after himself—like other men? His legs suddenly refused to support him, and he sat down on the pile of sacks.

The man in the kitchen seemed to have some difficulty in saying what he wanted to Mrs. Adis. He stood before her silently, twisting his cap.

"Well, what is it?" she asked.

"I want to speak to you, ma'am."

Peter Crouch listened, straining his ears, for his thudding heart nearly drowned the voices in the next room. Oh no, he

was sure she would not give him away. If only for Tom's sake. . . . She was a game sort, Mrs. Adis.

"Well?" she said, sharply, as the man remained tongue-tied.

"I have brought you bad news, Mrs. Adis."

Her expression changed.

"What? It ain't Tom, is it?"

"He's outside," said the keeper.

"What do you mean?" said Mrs. Adis, and she moved toward the door.

"Don't, ma'am—not till I've told you."

"Told me what? Oh, be quick, man, for mercy's sake." And she tried to push past him to the door.

"There's been a row," he said, "down by Cinder Wood. There was a chap there snaring rabbits, and Tom was walking with the Boormans and me and old Crotch down from the Castle. We heard a noise in the Eighteen pounder Spinney, and there. . . . It was too dark to see who it was, and directly he saw us he made off—but we'd scared him, and he let fly with his gun. . . ."

He stopped speaking and looked at her, as if beseeching her to fill in the gaps of his story. In his corner of the lean-to Peter Crouch was as a man of wood and sawdust.

"Tom—" said Mrs. Adis.

The keeper had forgotten his guard, and before he could prevent her she had flung open the door.

The men outside had evidently been waiting for the signal, and they came in, carrying something on a hurdle, which they put down in the middle of the kitchen floor.

"Is he dead?" asked Mrs. Adis without tears.

The men nodded. They could not find a dry voice like hers.

In the lean-to Peter Crouch had ceased to sweat and tremble. Strength had come with despair, for he knew he must despair now. Besides, he no longer wanted to escape from this thing that he had done. Oh, Tom!—and I was thinking it was one of them demmed keepers. Oh, Tom! And it was you that got it—got it from me! Reckon I don't want to live!

And yet life was sweet, for there was a woman at Ticehurst, a woman as staunch to him as Tom, who would go with him to the world's end even now. But he must not think of her. He had no right: his life was forfeit to Mrs. Adis.

She was sitting in the old basket armchair by the fire. One of the men had helped her into it. Another man with rough kindness had poured her out something from a flask he carried in his pocket. "Here, ma'am, take a drop of this. It'll give you strength."

"We'll go round to Ironlatch cottage and ask Mrs. Gain to come down to you."

"Reckon this is a turble thing to have come to you, but it's the will o' Providence, as some folks say; and as for the man who did it—we've a middling good guess who he is, and he shall swing."

"We didn't see his face, but we've got his gun. He threw it into an alder when he bolted, and I swear that gun belongs to Peter Crouch, who's been up to no good since the day when Mus' Scales sacked him for stealing his corn."

"Reckon, tho', he didn't know it was Tom when he did it—he and Tom always being better friends than he deserved."

Peter Crouch was standing upright now, looking through the crack of the door. He saw Mrs. Adis struggle to her feet and stand by the table, looking down on the dead man's face. A whole eternity seemed to roll by as she stood there. He saw her put her hand into her apron pocket, where she had thrust the key of the lean-to.

"The Boormans have gone after Crouch," said Vidler, nervously breaking the silence. "They'd a notion as he'd broken through the woods Ironlatch way. There's no chance of his having been by here? You haven't seen him to-night, ma'am?"

There was a pause.

"No," said Mrs. Adis, "I haven't seen him. Not since Tuesday." She took her hand out of her apron pocket.

"Well, we'll be getting around and fetch Mrs. Gain. Reckon you'll be glad to have her."

Mrs. Adis nodded.

"Will you carry him in there first?" And she pointed to the bedroom door.

The men picked up the hurdle and carried it into the next room. Then silently each wrung the mother by the hand and went away.

She waited until they had shut the door, then she came towards the lean-to. Crouch once more fell a-shivering. He couldn't bear it. No, he'd rather swing than face Mrs. Adis. He heard the key turn in the lock, and he nearly screamed.

But she did not come in. She merely unlocked the door, then crossed the kitchen with a heavy, dragging footstep and shut herself into the room where Tom was.

Peter Crouch knew what he must do—the only thing she wanted him to do, the only thing he could possibly do. He opened the door and silently went out.

ALICE HEGAN RICE

Novelist, short-story writer

Leading the life of a young lady of society among Southern aristocracy of Louisville, with some serious work in charity in the poor quarters of the town, it would have been an easy thing to let an ambition slip by; but Miss Hegan made the best of her opportunities. Isolating herself in the family attic, she put into a story the things that she had seen during her work in charity and wrote *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch*—the Cabbage Patch being the authentic name of the humble part of Louisville. Just before she was married to her future literary partner, Mr. Cale Young Rice, her book was published and her fame was immediate. Since then have followed many literary productions of the two Rices (Mr. Rice's fame came with his poetry), most of them done in separate volumes; some, like *Turn About Tales*, in congenial partnership.

In her letter Mrs. Rice gives some valuable concrete instructions in the art of short-story writing.

"It is a dangerous thing to ask an old writer to give advice to young writers! There are so many things to say, so many 'don'ts' and so many 'dos,' that the flood of suggestions is apt to swamp the small craft just putting out from shore. ————has asked me to tell you something about the art of writing, instead I am going to tell you quite informally and briefly some of the things that I would have been glad to know when I began to write. Some of them you may already know, others you will find

out for yourselves as you struggle to tell a good story in the best way.

"In the first place let us consider the plot. Is the story you have in mind interesting? Is the subject worth writing about? Is it something you have known and observed in real life, or gotten from some one else? Remember that the only excuse any writer has for attempting to portray life is that he sees it a little differently from the way any one else has ever seen it.

"It is rather thrilling, isn't it? to think that each of us has a special peep-hole through which to view life, a peep-hole through which no one has ever looked or will ever look again through eternity!

"This quality of originality in a writer is his most precious literary possession, and his whole aim should be to keep his vision true, and to cultivate a technic that will best embody it in permanent form.

"An ideal plot should have an advancing action, a developing character, and an increasing emotion. In order for the story to be dramatic there must be conflict, either mental, moral or physical.

"Once you have your plot well in mind, the next step is to see that you stick closely to it. In order to do this you must know the end of the story before it is begun, and make every paragraph lead up to it. It is an excellent plan to tell your story either to a friend or to yourself before you put it on paper, making it as definite and convincing as possible.

"As for the opening of a story, remember three things: It is well to seize the interest of your reader, strike the keynote of the plot, and begin the action in the first few paragraphs.

"Now for the characters. The only way to make your

readers know them is to know them intimately yourself. It is not necessary for you to tell all you know about them, but it is very necessary for you to have 'thought them out,' not only their present characteristics and qualities, but the heredity and environment that have made them what they are. Every human being is different from all other human beings, and it is the writer's task to seize upon this difference and embody it in a vital, convincing personality.

"Having your plot and your characters you have now to consider your background. Study your setting, and especially the effect the environment has had on the characters you wish to portray. See the place vividly and in detail, and describe it so that your readers may see it in the same way. The cries in the street, the odors of the town or country, the familiar sights and sounds all help to keep the scene vivid and convincing.

"One of the most important features of a short story is its point of view. In a novel the point of view may shift, you may look at your subject from many angles, but in a short story you must be very careful to maintain one point of view throughout. A short story is like a picture which must be painted from one angle, and which becomes confused and out of focus if the artist shifts his easel.

"I suppose most young people, at some time have the desire to write. Many of them have vivid imaginations, and the gift of story telling. But there are comparatively few who are willing to cultivate these gifts by hard study and conscientious perseverance. Any permanent achievement in literature, as in music and in painting, must come not alone from talent, but from the patient mastering of technic.

"To those of you who have serious ambitions, and are

willing to struggle through any difficulties to attain your goal, I can say that it is more than worth your effort. Whether you ever attain success or not, you will have acquired the ability to express yourself in writing, learned concentration, and gained a knowledge of human nature that will enrich your life."

—Alice Hegan Rice.

A PARTNERSHIP MEMORY [1]

There was but one bond of sympathy that could exist between the two men, yet neither seemed willing to be the first to allude to the subject uppermost in the mind of each. They had been playing chess in the Captain's stateroom the better part of a long, dull afternoon. Through the open door the sea stretched gray and passive, and the decks were wet with an intermittent drizzle of rain.

It was Richards who first opened the way to mutual confidences:

"Do you remember the last time we played chess in this room, Captain?" he asked, replacing the pawns in the box with fastidious precision.

"On your last crossing, I suppose," said the Captain casually, "ten or was it eleven years ago?"

"Eleven years in June. 'A white night full of stars' and the coast lights of China just glimmering on the horizon. A certain fair lady's last night on board and you and I playing for the privilege of sharing it with her."

"Oh! You mean Nina Starling?" The Captain looked up quizzically. "I ought to remember; I won."

"Yes, you won," admitted Richards.

"That sounds very much like a sigh of regret. In the light of recent lurid events it ought to be a sigh of exultation."

"Recent events might not have occurred had I had the last inning."

The Captain laid a heavy, bronzed hand on his shoulder. "My dear fellow, if ever the Fates were kind to a man they were to you that night. You and Nina Starling had met for

[1] From *Turn About Tales*. Reprinted by permission of The Century Company, New York.

your mutual destruction. I was shoved in for a buffer. I don't deny that I was as hard hit as you were, only I was used to it. I'd been hit before."

"Not by Mrs. Starling!"

"No, not by Nina Starling."

For some moments the two sat silent, smoking, the Captain a bluff handsome man of forty-five, his companion a few years his junior, slender, austere, wearing the uniform of a Major in the United States Army. The ashes of an old romance, thus stirred, evidently revealed some live embers, by the light of which each was traveling back through the years.

The Captain was the first to recover himself: "The difference between us was that you went into it blindfolded, and I went in with my eyes open. I'd known Nina ever since she was a youngster. They lived in Honolulu, you know, and I took her mother over the first trip I was in command. An awful fool she was too; neglected the girl shamefully until she discovered that she was a winning card, then she played her up for all she was worth!"

"Did you know Starling?"

"Never saw him. He only lived a couple of years after they were married. In fact, I never saw Nina again until she was on her way back to Honolulu with her small boy, on the very trip of which you speak."

"Poor little Bobby! You know his tragic end?"

"Oh, yes, the papers were full of it. Nina had about as much business with a son as Cleopatra."

"And yet she adored the boy."

"Oh, yes. He was her one permanent affair. The rest of us were transients. She entertained us royally when we came and promptly forgot us when we departed. It was pretty rum that in the end she should have been Bob's undoing. But then she was everybody's undoing that she came in contact with."

"On the contrary," Richards said, "we were her undoing. We asked too much of her. We demanded the impossible and she tried to give it!"

The Captain shook his head. "She is the female of the species," he contended. "She goes after what she wants, and if she cannot reach it by a straight course, she takes a crooked one. You would probably call it finesse."

Richards considered his slender well-shaped hands gravely. "I think I should call it the instinct of acquiescence. She is a creature of sudden fire, with a passionate desire to do the thing required of her for the person she loves, regardless of circumstances. Life confuses and baffles her. I admit she is politic, and perhaps not always straightforward, but her motive is never self-interest; she is always trying to get something for somebody else. You must admit that she is the most exquisitely generous person you ever knew."

"Oh, I'll admit anything good you want to say about her! The Lord knows she was kind to me. When she came back to Honolulu to live after her second marriage, she used to slip down to the dock whenever I made the port. I can see her now, as smart as a little white yacht under full sail, pretending to be interested in the arriving passengers when all the time she was wirelessing me on the bridge to hurry up, that her motor was waiting and that I was to take lunch with her. By George! that girl could say more with her eyes and one finger than most women can say with their tongues."

"Were you ever in her home?"

"Many a time. They had a wonderful place down below Waikiki—white beach, blue sea, and palms—you know, the kind of thing Honolulu specializes in. Well, she would treat me like a Grand Mogul. Nothing too good for me. She remembered the things I liked to eat, and the kind of cigars I liked to smoke. She gave me a taste of what a real home can be, and when my time was up, she'd run me down to the dock herself and give me a God-speed that would keep me warmed up for days to come. I tell you a man has to live at sea half his life to know what a thing like that means."

"But the Baron?" asked Richards. "From what I have heard of the gentleman, he was not one to give his wife free rein."

"Oh, von Sternman liked men to admire Nina. It gave him the satisfaction of knowing that he possessed what others wanted. And Nina never teased him. She'd lie to him, to be sure, and get him out of the way at times, but that was only to bring about more comfortable results. She wanted him to be happy, too. That was her religion; she wanted everybody to be happy."

"I suppose I was the exception that proved the rule," said Richards grimly. "The only cruel thing I ever knew her to do was to keep me dangling between heaven and hell from San Francisco to Hong Kong, and then to marry the Baron as soon as she got to Germany."

"Well, von Sternman happened to be on the spot when she landed, and I imagine he lost no time in pressing his suit. You see, you and I had made it rather an exciting voyage for her ladyship. When we dropped out, life became too dull. She could not bear to be out of a job."

"I did not drop out," Richards protested. "If I hadn't been under orders to report in the Philippines, the devil himself couldn't have stopped me. That was what I wanted to tell her that last night on board; as it was I lost my chance. I had to catch a steamer early the next morning for Manila, our letters miscarried, and she married the Baron."

There was a long pause, while Richards lit a fresh cigarette and the Captain idly fingered the chessmen. It was not a pause of finality, however; it was but a halt on the brink of the subject during which each looked back on the past through his own particular vista.

"Did she seem to care about von Sternman?" Richards brought out at last.

"Well, it's hard to say. She made over him, flattered him, spoiled him, and fooled him whenever it pleased her to. Of course she was inordinately proud of his position and his brains. He was a brilliant man, but hard as tacks. She spent a good part of her time explaining away his rudenesses."

"Yes," said Richards with absent eyes and slightly pursed

lips, "I can see her in the rôle. She had a gift for interpreting her friends to the world. She accorded herself the privilege of making the translation not too literal, and the result was always more charming than the original."

"In this case it couldn't have been worse. The Baron, with all his good looks and grand air, was a boor. I think Nina secretly feared him."

"Feared him?" Richards looked up sharply.

"Yes, at heart I think she always feared him. He had all a German's ideas about women, and if he had ever caught her in one of her escapades it would have gone hard with her. In fact I think that was just what did happen in the end."

"What happened," said Richards bitterly, "was that he made her the tool for his dirty work. What the poor girl has suffered during these past few years is something I don't like to think of."

"Nor I," agreed the Captain. "I did all I could for her. When war was declared in 1914 she was all in a flutter to get back to the States. She offered a dozen excuses; von Sternman was ill with malaria and had to get away from the Islands; she wanted to see her people; Bob wanted to enter a military school, etc. There wasn't an extra stateroom on board, but I turned out of my cabin for them. I let that big scoundrel of a German have my bed, all because Nina asked me to. And ten days after he landed in San Francisco, he forged a passport and got away to Europe."

"Yes," said Richards, "it was not long after that that I saw Mrs. Starling—she will always be 'Mrs. Starling' to me. We met in a New York hotel, in an elevator. It was the first time I'd seen her since we left this steamer seven years before, yet you would have thought we had not been parted twenty-four hours. She took me right into her confidence and poured out all her troubles."

"About the Baron?"

"No, about Bob. It seems he had set his heart on going to West Point. He had worked for years toward that end. His

appointment was all but secured when the Baron's departure became known, and the whole affair was trembling in the balance. Bob was beside himself with rage and disappointment, and Mrs. Starling had been moving heaven and earth to get him his heart's desire. I went up to their apartment and thrashed out the whole matter with them. Bob was a stunning chap, built for the army, every inch of him. He was too loyal to his mother to express himself openly concerning the Baron, but I never saw more concentrated hatred than he showed in his face every time his name was mentioned. I remember how he paced the floor, declaring that it wasn't fair for his life to be smashed like that, that if he failed to get the appointment it would be a blot on his character he could never live down. And Mrs. Starling, white as a sheet, kept saying, 'You are going to get it, Bob. I got you into this and I am going to get you out of it. The Major and I will arrange some way.'"

"And the Major did?" the Captain threw in sarcastically.

"No, she did it herself, though of course I pulled a few wires in the War Department, and introduced her to Senator Gray, upon whose decision the whole matter hinged. It was a difficult thing to arrange, for he refused point blank to give a personal interview, as he was leaving town in a couple of hours."

"I'll wager Nina got the interview."

"Well, as a matter of fact, she did. He talked with her for an hour, then asked her to lunch with him. When I called at the apartment in the afternoon Bob told me Senator Gray had thought it best for her to go down to Washington with him to clinch the matter."

"So that was how Bob got his commission!"

The Captain leaned back in his chair and smiled.

"There is nobody like her. She's so frail and yielding and yet so irresistible. It isn't merely her beauty. I've seen a dozen women I thought were prettier. It's something more, something a blind man would feel. You say she has not changed much?"

"Well, I suppose she has," Richards admitted; "her figure perhaps more than her coloring."

"Naturally. A clever woman finds it easier to camouflage her complexion than to camouflage her figure."

"She can't change the color of her eyes," said Richards coolly.

"Those ridiculously blue eyes!" The Captain laughed. "I used to get an electric shock every time I looked into them. After all, I think that is Nina's chief charm; she is so terrifically aware of you—that is, when she isn't aware of some one else."

"It is we who are aware," urged Richards. "You know those lines, 'The innocent moon that nothing does but shine, moves all the slumbering surges of the world.' Mrs. Starling is like a radiant lighthouse against which poor befuddled gulls beat out their brains."

"Here's one wise old eagle that didn't!" The Captain chuckled. "A lighthouse means keep off the rocks to me, and you bet I have. She is the only woman I was ever afraid of in my life. But you were telling me of her mission to Washington. Did you see her again?"

"No. I was down on the border that winter; but I heard of her. She took a house at West Point, to be near Bob, and I hear she had the whole Post crazy about her."

"Yes, I shouldn't wonder if that was the reason Bob got first honor; all the other cadets were probably wasting their time flirting with his mother."

"His mother was doing everything in her power for him," said Richards stiffly; "her ambition was as great as his."

"Oh, I wouldn't call it ambition on her part. She just wanted Bob to have what he wanted. If he had set his heart on being a burglar she would have helped him to it just the same. What did the officers seem to think of Bob?"

"There was but one thing to think. I tell you, Bob Starling was everything a soldier ought to be. One of the instructors told me he was considered the most promising man that had passed through the Academy in years. That was the tragedy of it."

"And when did the complication with the Baron begin? He evidently lost no time in putting Nina to work as soon as he reached Berlin."

"I imagine the scoundrel was using her from the first. The letters dated from 1915, but it was not until after we went into the war that things began to leak out. You see, the letters were not in code or anything of that kind; they would have passed without suspicion anywhere. All Mrs. Starling did was to forward them to the German Ambassador, who was an old friend of von Sternman's. How could she know that they contained secret information?"

"She probably didn't," agreed the Captain, "but it must have struck her as strange that her husband would ask her to send his private letters to her, containing nothing whatever of an official nature, to the German Embassy at Washington."

Richards' face flushed: "I did not realize that I was discussing Mrs. Starling with one of her enemies. I took it for granted that you shared my belief in her innocence."

"Nina innocent! Why, I can as soon think of Methuselah being young! My dear man, you do her an injustice."

"The Court evidently shared my opinion," said Richards. "No stones were left unturned by the Prosecuting Attorney to convict her of conspiracy. Everything was against her—the fact that we had just gone into the war; that public opinion was flaming against any evidence of pro-Germanism; that she did not deny having forwarded the letters. Yet she was completely exonerated."

"Do you wonder?" asked Captain Sherry.

"I knew it was all up with the jury when I saw she was going to conduct her own case. 'The Beautiful Baroness von Sternman, a loyal American citizen, made the tool of her unscrupulous German husband!' I can see the headlines now. I've got a copy of one of the papers around here somewhere. I kept it because it had rather a good picture of Nina."

He opened a desk drawer and, after some fumbling, took out a newspaper clipping carefully protected between cardboards. The two men looked at the picture for some moments in silence, and one of them smiled with his eyes, and one of them smiled with his lips. The Captain was the first to speak:

"Perfect stage setting," he said. "Belasco could not have done better. And a situation worthy of Nina's genius. Can't you see her now taking in the whole bunch right down to the case-hardened reporters?"

"And you alone refuse her even the benefit of a doubt!" exclaimed Richards hotly. "I should think that the fact that she brought divorce proceedings against von Sternman the moment she discovered the truth, would be sufficient guarantee of her innocence."

Captain Sherry's eyes twinkled: "A superb *coup de grâce!* Nothing could have climaxed the situation so dramatically and so convincingly. It satisfied everybody, apparently, but Uncle Sam. Unfortunately he is less susceptible to feminine charms than other men. Even though he let her off, he decided that he did not want an officer in his army whose step-father was on the Kaiser's staff, and whose mother had been tried for a German spy. I understand that everything possible was done at West Point to let Bob down easy, but you can't pitch a man out of the window without breaking something."

"In this case it was the boy's heart," said Richards. "It happened in May, you see, and he was to have been graduated in June. You would have needed to know him in recent years to understand just what it meant to him. An honor man for three consecutive years, and patriotic to his finger tips. I don't blame him for doing what he did. I'd have done it in his place."

"A rotten business," sighed the Captain. "I have forgotten the details. It was Nina who found him, wasn't it?"

"Yes. She got back to West Point the night it happened, went to his room and found him still in his uniform with a bullet through his heart, and beside him a small American flag on which was written, 'For my country.'"

They sat silent, each closeted in his own reflections. Then Richards said:

"Such a tragedy would have crushed a woman of coarser fiber, but Mrs. Starling bent to it like a flower in a hurricane. She felt the beauty of his death and the perfection of his sacri-

fice, just as she felt von Sternman's position and what he did for his country. Her letter to me, at the time, was one of the noblest things I ever read. She did not blame anybody. There was no bitterness nor rebellion, nor recrimination, only the most exquisite understanding and acquiescence. She has a wonderful soul, a—"

Then realizing how warmly he was speaking, he rose abruptly, and pushed back his chair:

"After all, it's a subject upon which you and I could never agree. We have been foolish to discuss it."

"Not at all," said the Captain; "we have passed a very pleasant afternoon. By the way, I suppose you know of course that she has married again."

Richards stopped abruptly in the doorway. "Mrs. Starling married?" he repeated dully.

"Yes, I saw it in a German paper in Hong Kong last month. She managed to get over to Berlin by way of South America, shipped as a stewardess on a German boat, and reëntered the ranks of the German nobility."

"You don't mean that she has married another baron?" asked Richards aghast.

Captain Sherry's bluff laugh rang out heartily. "Oh, Lord, no!" he said; "it's the same one!"

EDITH WHARTON

Novelist, short-story writer, critic

So much is Mrs. Wharton's work an art that we associate her name with all that the term "stylist" means. She has studied the great masters of fiction and has learned what to take from them and make her own. This does not mean that she is a direct imitator, although she has been strongly influenced by certain writers—Henry James, for instance. Like him she deals with characters of the aristocracy and like him she studies their psychological behavior. She is by birth a member of New York aristocracy and her novels picture the life of New York society—particularly of the Victorian Age.

To know Mrs. Wharton adequately, one must know these novels of New York life. To realize how she knows and studies her art, one must read completely her book on *The Writing of Fiction*, a part of which is quoted here.

Mrs. Wharton has published several volumes of short-stories, cleverly constructed and cleverly told. Sometimes these stories are satirical studies of society; sometimes they are studies in the supernatural. Whatever they are, they are carefully planned and brilliantly written.

Though the critic no longer feels that need of classifying and sub-classifying the *genres* which so preoccupied the contemporaries of Wordsworth, there are, in all the arts, certain local products that seem to necessitate a parenthesis.

Such, in fiction, is the use of the supernatural. It seems to have come from mysterious Germanic and Armorican

forests, from lands of long twilights and wailing winds; and it certainly did not pass through French or even Russian hands to reach us. Sorcerers and magic are of the south, the Mediterranean; the witch of Theocritus brewed a brew fit for his sister-hags of the Scottish heath; but the spectral apparition walks only in the pages of English and Germanic fiction.

It has done so, to great effect, in some of the most original of our great English short stories, from Scott's "Wandering Willy" and Poe's awful hallucinations to Lefanu's "Watcher," and from the "Thrawn Janet" of Stevenson to "The Turn of the Screw" of Henry James, last great master of the eerie in English.

All these tales, in which the effect sought is completely achieved, are models of the subtlest artifice. It is not enough to believe in ghosts, or even to have seen one, to be able to write a good ghost story. The greater the improbability to be overcome the more studied must be the approach, the more perfectly maintained the air of naturalness, the easy assumption that things are always likely to happen in that way.

One of the chief obligations, in a short-story, is to give the reader an immediate sense of security. Every phrase should be a sign-post, and never (unless intentionally) a misleading one: the reader must feel that he can trust to their guidance. His confidence once gained, he may be lured on to the most incredible adventures—as the Arabian Nights are there to show. A wise critic once said: "You may ask your reader to believe anything you can *make* him believe." It is never the *genii* who are unreal, but only their unconvinced historian's description of them. The least touch of irrelevance, the least chill of inattention, will instantly undo the spell, and it will take as long

to weave again as to get Humpty Dumpty back on his wall. The moment the reader loses faith in the author's sureness of foot the chasm of improbability gapes.

Improbability in itself is never a danger, but the appearance of improbability is; unless, indeed, the tale be based on what, in my first chapter, I called pathological conditions—conditions of body or mind outside the field of normal experience. This term, of course, does not apply to states of mind inherited from an earlier phase of race-culture, such as the belief in ghosts. No one with a spark of imagination ever objected to a good ghost story as "improbable"—though Mrs. Barbauld, who doubtless lacked the spark, is said to have condemned "The Ancient Mariner" on this ground. Most of us retain the more or less shadowy memory of ancestral terrors, and airy tongues that syllable men's names. We cannot believe *à priori* in the probability of the actions of madmen, or neurasthenics, because their reasoning processes escape most of us, or can at best be imagined only as belonging to abnormal and exceptional people; but everybody knows a good ghost when he reads about him.

When the reader's confidence is gained the next rule of the game is to avoid distracting and splintering up his attention. Many a would-be tale of horror becomes innocuous through the very multiplication and variety of its horrors. Above all, if they are multiplied they should be cumulative and not dispersed. But the fewer the better: once the preliminary horror posited, it is the harping on the same string—the same nerve—that does the trick. Quiet iteration is far more racking than diversified assaults; the expected is more frightful than the unforeseen. The play of "Emperor Jones" is a striking instance of the power of simplification and repetition to excite in an audi-

ence a corresponding state of tension. By sheer voodoo-practice it shows how voodoo acts.

In "The Turn of the Screw"—which stands alone among tales of the supernatural in maintaining the ghostliness of its ghosts not only through a dozen pages but through close on two hundred—the economy of horror is carried to its last degree. What is the reader made to expect? Always—all through the book—that somewhere in that hushed house of doom the poor little governess will come on one of the two figures of evil with whom she is fighting for the souls of her charges. It will be either Peter Quint or "horror of horrors," Miss Jessel; no diversion from this one dread is ever attempted or expected. It is true that the tale is strongly held together by its profound, its appalling moral significance; but most readers will admit that, long before they are conscious of this, fear, simple shivering animal fear, has them by the throat; which, after all, is what writers of ghost stories are after.

—Edith Wharton, *The Writing of Fiction.*[1]

[1] Reprinted by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

THE EYES [1]

I

We had been put in the mood for ghosts, that evening, after an excellent dinner at our old friend Culwin's, by a tale of Fred Murchard's—the narrative of a strange personal visitation.

Seen through the haze of our cigars, and by the drowsy gleam of a coal fire, Culwin's library, with its oak walls and dark old bindings, made a good setting for such evocations; and ghostly experiences at first hand being, after Murchard's opening, the only kind acceptable to us, we proceeded to take stock of our group and tax each member for a contribution. There were eight of us, and seven contrived, in a manner more or less adequate to fulfill the condition imposed. It surprised us all to find that we could muster such a show of supernatural impressions, for none of us, excepting Murchard himself and young Phil Frenham—whose story was the slightest of the lot—had the habit of sending our souls into the invisible. So that, on the whole, we had every reason to be proud of our seven "exhibits," and none of us would have dreamed of expecting an eighth from our host.

Our old friend, Mr. Andrew Culwin, who had sat back in his arm-chair, listening and blinking through the smoke circles with the cheerful tolerance of a wise old idol, was not the kind of man likely to be favoured with such contacts, though he had imagination enough to enjoy, without envying, the superior privileges of his guests. By age and by education he belonged to the stout Positivist tradition, and his habit of thought had been formed in the days of the epic struggle between physics and metaphysics. But he had been, then and always, essentially a spectator, a humorous detached observer of the immense mud-

[1] From *Tales of Men and Ghosts*. Reprinted by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

dled variety show of life, slipping out of his seat now and then for a brief dip into the convivialities at the back of the house, but never, as far as one knew, showing the least desire to jump on the stage and do a "turn."

Among his contemporaries there lingered a vague tradition of his having, at a remote period, and in a romantic clime, been wounded in a duel; but this legend no more tallied with what we younger men knew of his character than my mother's assertion that he had once been "a charming little man with nice eyes" corresponded to any possible reconstitution of his physiognomy.

"He never can have looked like anything but a bundle of sticks," Murchard had once said of him. "Or a phosphorescent log, rather," some one else amended; and we recognized the happiness of this description of his small squat trunk, with the red blink of the eyes in a face like mottled bark. He had always been possessed of a leisure which he had nursed and protected, instead of squandering it in vain activities. His carefully guarded hours had been devoted to the cultivation of a fine intelligence and a few judiciously chosen habits; and none of the disturbances common to human experience seemed to have crossed his sky. Nevertheless, his dispassionate survey of the universe had not raised his opinion of that costly experiment, and his study of the human race seemed to have resulted in the conclusion that all men were superfluous, and women necessary only because some one had to do the cooking. On the importance of this point his convictions were absolute, and gastronomy was the only science which he revered as a dogma. It must be owned that his little dinners were a strong argument in favour of this view, besides being a reason—though not the main one—for the fidelity of his friends.

Mentally he exercised a hospitality less seductive but no less stimulating. His mind was like a forum, or some open meeting-place for the exchange of ideas: somewhat cold and draughty, but light, spacious and orderly—a kind of academic grove from which all the leaves have fallen. In this privileged area a dozen of us were wont to stretch our muscles and expand our lungs;

and, as if to prolong as much as possible the tradition of what we felt to be a vanishing institution, one or two neophytes were now and then added to our band.

Young Phil Frenham was the last, and the most interesting, of these recruits, and a good example of Murchard's somewhat morbid assertion that our old friend "liked 'em juicy." It was indeed a fact that Culwin, for all his dryness, specially tasted the lyric qualities in youth. As he was far too good an Epicurean to nip the flowers of soul which he gathered for his garden, his friendship was not a disintegrating influence: on the contrary, it forced the young idea to robuster bloom. And in Phil Frenham he had a good subject for experimentation. The boy was really intelligent, and the soundness of his nature was like the pure paste under a fine glaze. Culwin had fished him out of a fog of family dullness, and pulled him up to a peak in Darien; and the adventure hadn't hurt him a bit. Indeed, the skill with which Culwin had contrived to stimulate his curiosities without robbing them of their bloom of awe seemed to me a sufficient answer to Murchard's ogreish metaphor. There was nothing hectic in Frenham's efflorescence, and his old friend had not laid even a finger-tip on the sacred stupidities. One wanted no better proof of that than the fact that Frenham still reverenced them in Culwin.

"There's a side of him you fellows don't see. *I* believe that story about the duel!" he declared; and it was of the very essence of this belief that it should impel him—just as our little party was dispersing—to turn back to our host with the joking demand: "And now you've got to tell us about *your* ghost!"

The outer door had closed on Murchard and the others; only Frenham and I remained; and the devoted servant who presided over Culwin's destinies, having brought a fresh supply of soda-water, had been laconically ordered to bed.

Culwin's sociability was a night-blooming flower, and we knew that he expected the nucleus of his group to tighten around him after midnight. But Frenham's appeal seemed to disconcert him comically, and he rose from the chair in which he had just reseated himself after his farewells in the hall.

"*My* ghost? Do you suppose I'm fool enough to go to the expense of keeping one of my own, when there are so many charming ones in my friends' closets?—Take another cigar," he said revolving toward me with a laugh.

Frenham laughed too, pulling up his slender height before the chimney-piece as he turned to face his short bristling friend.

"Oh," he said, "You'd never be content to share if you met one you really liked."

Culwin had dropped back into his arm-chair, his shock head embedded in the hollow of worn leather, his little eyes glimmering over a fresh cigar.

"Liked—*liked?* Good Lord!" he growled.

"Ah, *you have*, then!" Frenham pounced on him in the same instant, with a side-glance of victory at me; but Culwin cowered gnomelike among his cushions, dissembling himself in a protective cloud of smoke.

"What's the use of denying it? You've seen everything, so of course you've seen a ghost!" his young friend persisted, talking intrepidly into the cloud. "Or if you haven't seen one, it's only because you've seen two!"

The form of the challenge seemed to strike our host. He shot his head out of the mist with a queer tortoiselike motion he sometimes had, and blinked approvingly at Frenham.

"That's it," he flung at us on a shrill jerk of laughter; "It's only because I've seen two!"

The words were so unexpected that they dropped down and down into a deep silence, while we continued to stare at each other over Culwin's head, and Culwin stared at his ghosts. At length Frenham, without speaking, threw himself into the chair on the other side of the hearth, and leaned forward with his listening smile. . . .

II

"Oh, of course they're not show ghosts—a collector wouldn't think anything of them. . . . Don't let me raise your hopes . . . their one merit is their numerical strength: the exceptional

fact of there being *two*. But, as against this, I'm bound to admit that at any moment I could probably have exorcised them both by asking my doctor for a prescription, or my oculist for a pair of spectacles. Only, as I never could make up my mind whether to go to the doctor or the oculist—whether I was afflicted by an optical or a digestive delusion—I left them to pursue their interesting double life, though at times they made mine exceedingly uncomfortable. . . .

"Yes—uncomfortable; and you know how I hate to be uncomfortable! But it was part of my stupid pride, when the thing began, not to admit that I could be disturbed by the trifling matter of seeing two—

"And then I'd no reason, really, to suppose I was ill. As far as I knew I was simply bored—horribly bored. But it was part of my boredom—I remember—that I was feeling so uncommonly well, and didn't know how on earth to work off my surplus energy. I had come back from a long journey—down in South America and Mexico—and had settled down for the winter near New York, with an old aunt who had known Washington Irving and corresponded with N. P. Willis. She lived, not far from Irvington, in a damp Gothic villa, overhung by Norway spruces, and looking exactly like a memorial emblem done in hair. Her personal appearance was in keeping with this image, and her own hair—of which there was little left—might have been sacrificed to the manufacture of the emblem.

"I had just reached the end of an agitated year, with considerable arrears to make up in money and emotion; and theoretically it seemed as though my aunt's mild hospitality would be as beneficial to my nerves as to my purse. But the deuce of it was that as soon as I felt myself safe and sheltered my energy began to revive; and how was I to work it off inside of a memorial emblem? I had, at that time, the illusion that sustained intellectual effort could engage a man's whole activity; and I decided to write a great book—I forget about what. My aunt, impressed by my plan, gave up to me her Gothic library, filled with classics bound in black cloth and daguerreotypes of faded

celebrities; and I sat down at my desk to win myself a place among their number. And to facilitate my task she lent me a cousin to copy my manuscript.

"The cousin was a nice girl, and I had an idea that a nice girl was just what I needed to restore my faith in human nature, and principally in myself. She was neither beautiful nor intelligent—poor Alice Nowell!—but it interested me to see any woman content to be so uninteresting, and I wanted to find out the secret of her content. In doing this I handled it rather rashly, and put it out of joint,—oh, just for a moment! There's no fatuity in telling you this, for the poor girl had never seen any one but cousins . . .

"Well, I was sorry for what I'd done, of course, and confoundedly bothered as to how I should put it straight. She was staying in the house, and one evening, after my aunt had gone to bed, she came down to the library to fetch a book she'd mislaid, like any artless heroine on the shelves behind us. She was pink-nosed and flustered, and it suddenly occurred to me that her hair, though it was fairly thick and pretty, would look exactly like my aunt's when she grew older, I was glad I had noticed this, for it made it easier for me to decide to do what was right; and when I had found the book she hadn't lost I told her I was leaving for Europe that week.

"Europe was terribly far off in those days, and Alice knew at once what I meant. She didn't take it in the least as I'd expected—it would have been easier if she had. She held her book very tight, and turned away a moment to wind up the lamp on my desk—it had a ground glass shade with vine leaves, and glass drops around the edge, I remember. Then she came back, held out her hand, and said: 'Good-bye.' And as she said it she looked straight at me and kissed me. I had never felt anything as fresh and shy and brave as her kiss. It was worse than any reproach, and it made me ashamed to deserve a reproach from her. I said to myself: 'I'll marry her, and when my aunt dies she'll leave us this house, and I'll sit here at the desk and go on with my book; and Alice will sit over there with

her embroidery and look at me as she's looking now. And life will go on like that for any numbers of years.' The prospect frightened me a little, but at the time it didn't frighten me as much as doing anything to hurt her; and ten minutes later she had my seal ring on her finger, and my promise that when I went abroad she should go with me.

"You'll wonder why I'm enlarging on this incident. It's because the evening on which it took place was the very evening on which I first saw the queer sight I've spoken of. Being at that time an ardent believer in a necessary sequence between cause and effect I naturally tried to trace some kind of link between what had just happened to me in my aunt's library, and what was to happen a few hours later on the same night; and so the coincidence between the two events always remained in my mind.

"I went up to bed with rather a heavy heart, for I was bowed under the weight of the first good action I had ever consciously committed: and young as I was, I saw the gravity of my situation. Don't imagine from this that I had hitherto been an instrument of destruction. I had been merely a harmless young man, who had followed his bent and declined all collaboration with Providence. Now I had suddenly undertaken to promote the moral order of the world, and I felt a good deal like the trustful spectator who has given his gold watch to the conjurer, and doesn't know in what shape he'll get it back when the trick is over. . . . Still, a glow of self-righteousness tempered my fears, and I said to myself as I undressed that when I'd got used to being good it probably wouldn't make me as nervous as it did at the start. And by the time I was in bed, and had blown out my candle, I felt that I really *was* getting used to it, and that, as far as I'd got, it was not unlike sinking down into one of my aunt's very softest wool mattresses.

"I closed my eyes on this image, and when I opened them it must have been a good deal later, for my room had grown cold, and intensely still. I was waked by the queer feeling we all know—the feeling that there was something in the room that

hadn't been there when I fell asleep. I sat up and strained my eyes into the darkness. The room was pitch black, and at first I saw nothing; but gradually a vague glimmer at the foot of the bed turned into two eyes staring back at me. I couldn't distinguish the features attached to them, but as I looked the eyes grew more and more distinct; they gave out a light of their own.

"The sensation of being thus gazed at was far from pleasant, and you might suppose that my first impulse would have been to jump out of bed and hurl myself on the invisible figure attached to the eyes. But it wasn't—my impulse was simply to lie still. . . . I can't say whether this was due to an immediate sense of the uncanny nature of the apparition—to the certainty that if I did jump out of bed I should hurl myself on nothing—or merely to the benumbing effect of the eyes themselves. They were the very worst eyes I've ever seen: a man's eyes—but what a man! My first thought was that he must be frightfully old. The orbits were sunk, and the thick red-lined lids hung over the eyeballs like blinds of which the cords are broken. One lid drooped a little lower than the other with the effect of a crooked leer; and between these folds of flesh, with their scant bristle of lashes, the eyes themselves, small glassy disks with an agate-like rim, looked like sea-pebbles in the grip of a star-fish.

"But the age of the eyes was not the most unpleasant thing about them. What turned me sick was their expression of vicious security. I don't know how else to describe the fact that they seemed to belong to a man who had done a lot of harm in his life, but had always kept just inside the danger lines. They were not the eyes of a coward, but of some one much too clever to take risks; and my gorge rose at their look of base astuteness. Yet even that wasn't the worse; for as we continued to scan each other I saw in them a tinge of derision, and felt myself to be its object.

"At that I was seized by an impulse of rage that jerked me to my feet and pitched me straight at the unseen figure. But of course there wasn't any figure there, and my fists struck at emptiness. Ashamed and cold, I groped about for a match and

lit the candles. The room looked just as usual—as I had known it would; and I crawled back to bed, and blew out the lights.

"As soon as the room was dark again the eyes reappeared; and I now applied myself to explaining them on scientific principles. At first I thought the illusion might have been caused by the glow of the last embers in the chimney; but the fireplace was on the other side of my bed, and so placed that the fire could not be reflected in my toilet glass, which was the only mirror in the room. Then it struck me that I might have been tricked by the reflection of the embers in some polished bit of wood or metal; and though I couldn't discover any object of the sort in my line of vision, I got up again, groped my way to the hearth, and covered what was left of the fire. But as soon as I was back in bed the eyes were back at its foot.

"They were an hallucination, then: that was plain. But the fact that they were not due to any external dupery didn't make them a bit pleasanter. For if they were a projection of my inner consciousness, what the deuce was the matter with that organ? I had gone deeply enough into the mystery of morbid pathological states to picture the conditions under which an exploring mind might lay itself open to such a midnight admonition; but I couldn't fit it to my present case. I had never felt more normal, mentally and physically; and the only unusual fact in my situation—that of having assured the happiness of an amiable girl—did not seem of a kind to summon unclean spirits about my pillow. But there were the eyes still looking at me. . . .

"I shut mine, and tried to evoke a vision of Alice Nowell's. They were not remarkable eyes, but they were as wholesome as fresh water, and if she had had more imagination—or longer lashes—their expression might have been interesting. As it was, they did not prove very efficacious, and in a few moments I perceived that they had mysteriously changed into the eyes at the foot of the bed. It exasperated me more to feel these glaring at me through my shut lids than to see them, and I opened my eyes again and looked straight into their hateful stare. . . .

"And so it went on all night. I can't tell you what that night was like, nor how long it lasted. Have you ever lain in bed, hopelessly wide awake, and tried to keep your eyes shut, knowing that if you opened 'em you'd see something you dreaded and loathed? It sounds easy but it's devilish hard. Those eyes hung there and drew me. I had the *vertige de l'abîme*, and their red lids were the edge of my abyss . . . I had known nervous hours before: hours when I'd felt the wind of danger in my neck; but never this kind of strain. It wasn't that the eyes were awful; they hadn't the majesty of the powers of darkness. But they had—how shall I say?—a physical effect that was the equivalent of a bad smell; their look left a smear like a snail's. And I didn't see what business they had with me, anyhow—and I stared and stared, trying to find out. . . .

"I don't know what effect they were trying to produce; but the effect they *did* produce was that of making me pack my portmanteau and bolt to town early the next morning. I left a note for my aunt, explaining that I was ill and had gone to see my doctor; and as a matter of fact I did feel uncommonly ill—the night seemed to have pumped all the blood out of me. But when I reached town I didn't go to the doctor's. I went to a friend's rooms, and threw myself on a bed, and slept for ten heavenly hours. When I woke it was the middle of the night, and I turned cold at the thought of what might be waiting for me. I sat up, shaking, and stared into the darkness; but there wasn't a break in its blessed surface, and when I saw that the eyes were not there I dropped back into another long sleep.

"I had left no word for Alice when I fled, because I meant to go back the next morning. But the next morning I was too exhausted to stir. As the day went on the exhaustion increased, instead of wearing off like the fatigue left by an ordinary night of insomnia; the effect of the eyes seemed to be cumulative, and the thought of seeing them again grew intolerable. For two days I fought my dread; and on the third evening I pulled myself together and decided to go back the next morning. I felt a good deal happier as soon as I'd decided, for I knew that

my abrupt disappearance, and the strangeness of my not writing, must have been very distressing to poor Alice. I went to bed with an easy mind, and fell asleep at once; but in the middle of the night I woke, and there were the eyes. . . .

"Well, I simply couldn't face them; and instead of going back to my aunt's I bundled up a few things into a trunk and jumped aboard the first steamer for England. I was so dead tired when I got on board that I crawled straight into my berth, and slept most of the way over; and I can't tell you the bliss it was to wake from those long dreamless stretches and look fearlessly into the dark, *knowing* that I shouldn't see the eyes. . . .

"I stayed abroad for a year, and then I stayed for another; and during that time I never had a glimpse of them. That was enough reason for prolonging my stay if I'd been on a desert island. Another was, of course, that I had perfectly come to see, on the voyage over, the complete impossibility of my marrying Alice Nowell. The fact that I had been so slow in making this discovery annoyed me, and made me want to avoid explanations. The bliss of escaping at one stroke from the eyes, and from this other embarrassment, gave my freedom an extraordinary zest; and the longer I savoured it the better I liked its taste.

"The eyes had burned such a hole in my consciousness that for a long time I went on puzzling over the nature of the apparition, and wondering if it would ever come back. But as time passed I lost this dread, and retained only the precision of the image. Then that faded in its turn.

"The second year found me settled in Rome, where I was planning, I believe, to write another great book—a definitive work on Etruscan influences in Italian art. At any rate, I'd found some pretext of the kind for taking a sunny apartment in the Piazza di Spagna and dabbling about in the Forum; and there, one morning, a charming youth came to me. As he stood there in the warm light, slender and smooth and hyacinthine, he might have stepped from a ruined altar—one to Antinous, say; but he'd come instead from New York, with a letter (of all people) from Alice Nowell. The letter—the first I'd had from

her since our break—was simply a line introducing her young cousin, Gilbert Noyes, and appealing to me to befriend him. It appeared, poor lad, that he 'had talent,' and 'wanted to write'; and, an obdurate family having insisted that his calligraphy should take the form of double entry, Alice had intervened to win for him six months' respite, during which he was to travel abroad on a meagre pittance, and somehow prove his ability to increase it by his pen. The quaint conditions of the test struck me first; it seemed about as conclusive as a mediæval 'ordeal.' Then I was touched by her having sent him to me. I had always wanted to do her some service, to justify myself in my own eyes rather than hers; and here was a beautiful occasion.

"I imagine it's safe to lay down the general principle that predestined geniuses don't, as a rule, appear before one in the spring sunshine of the Forum looking like one of its banished gods. At any rate, poor Noyes wasn't a predestined genius. But he *was* beautiful to see, and charming as a comrade. It was only when he began to talk literature that my heart failed me. I knew all the symptoms so well—the things he had 'in him' and the things outside him that impinged! There's the real test, after all. It was always—punctually, inevitably, with the inexorableness of a mechanical law—it was *always* the wrong thing that struck him. I grew to find a certain fascination in deciding in advance exactly which wrong thing he'd select; and I acquired an astonishing skill at the game. . . .

"The worst of it was that his bêtise wasn't of the too obvious sort. Ladies who met him at picnics thought him intellectual; and even at dinners he passed for clever. I, who had him under the microscope, fancied now and then that he might develop some kind of a slim talent, something that he could make 'do' and be happy on; and wasn't that, after all, what I was concerned with? He was so charming—he continued to be so charming—that he called forth all my charity in support of this argument; and for the first few months I really believed there was a chance for him. . . .

"Those months were delightful. Noyes was constantly with me, and the more I saw of him the better I liked him. His stupidity was a natural grace—it was as beautiful really, as his eyelashes. And he was so gay, so affectionate, and so happy with me, that telling him the truth would have been about as pleasant as slitting the throat of some gentle animal. At first I used to wonder what had put into that radiant head the detestable delusion that it held a brain. Then I began to see that it was simply protective mimicry—an instinctive ruse to get away from family life and an office desk. Not that Gilbert didn't—dear lad!—believe in himself. There wasn't a trace of hypocrisy in him. He was sure that his 'call' was irresistible, while to me it was the saving grace of his situation that it *wasn't*, and that a little money, a little leisure, a little pleasure would have turned him into an inoffensive idler. Unluckily, however, there was no hope of money, and with the alternative of the office desk before him he couldn't postpone his attempt at literature. The stuff he turned out was deplorable, and I see now that I knew it from the first. Still, the absurdity of deciding a man's whole future on a first trial seemed to justify me in witholding my verdict, and perhaps even in encouraging him a little, on the ground that the human plant generally needs warmth to flower.

"At any rate, I proceeded on that principle, and carried it to the point of getting his term of probation extended. When I left Rome he went with me, and we idled away a delicious summer between Capri and Venice. I said to myself: 'If he has anything in him, it will come out now,' and it *did*. He was never more enchanting and enchanted. There were moments of our pilgrimage when beauty born of murmuring sound seemed actually to pass into his face—but only to issue forth in a flood of the palest ink. . . .

"Well, the time came to turn off the tap; and I knew there was no hand but mine to do it. We were back in Rome, and I had taken him to stay with me, not wanting him to be alone in his *pension* when he had to face the necessity of renouncing his ambition. I hadn't, of course, relied solely on my own judg-

ment in deciding to advise him to drop literature. I had sent his stuff to various people—editors and critics—and they had always sent it back with the same chilling lack of comment. Really there was nothing on earth to say—

"I confess I never felt more shabbily than I did on the day when I decided to have it out with Gilbert. It was well enough to tell myself that it was my duty to knock the poor boy's hopes into splinters—but I'd like to know what act of gratuitous cruelty hasn't been justified on that plea? I've always shrunk from usurping the functions of Providence, and when I have to exercise them I decidedly prefer that it shouldn't be on an errand of destruction. Besides, in the last issue, who was I to decide, even after a year's trial, if poor Gilbert had it in him or not?

"The more I looked at the part I'd resolved to play, the less I liked it; and I liked it still less when Gilbert sat opposite me, with his head thrown back in the lamplight, just as Phil's is now . . . I'd been going over his last manuscript, and he knew it, and he knew that his future hung on my verdict—we'd tacitly agreed to that. The manuscript lay between us, on my table—a novel, his first novel, if you please!—and he reached over and laid his hand on it, and looked up at me with all his life in the look.

"I stood up and cleared my throat, trying to keep my eyes away from his face and on the manuscript.

"'The fact is, my dear Gilbert,' I began—

"I saw him turn pale, but he was up and facing me in an instant.

"'Oh, look here, don't take on so, my dear fellow! I'm not so awfully cut up as all that!' His hands were on my shoulders, and he was laughing down on me from his full height, with a kind of mortally-stricken gaiety that drove the knife into my side.

"He was too beautifully brave for me to keep up any humbug about my duty. And it came over me suddenly how I should hurt others in hurting him; myself first, since sending him home

meant losing him; but more particularly poor Alice Nowell, to whom I had so longed to prove my good faith and my desire to serve her. It really seemed like failing her twice to fail Gilbert—

"But my intuition was like one of those lightning flashes that encircle the whole horizon, and in the same instant I saw what I might be letting myself in for if I didn't tell the truth. I said to myself: 'I shall have him for life'—and I'd never yet seen any one, man or woman, whom I was quite sure of wanting on those terms. Well, this impulse of egotism decided me. I was ashamed of it, and to get away from it I took a leap that landed me straight in Gilbert's arms.

"'The thing's all right, and you're all wrong!' I shouted up at him; and as he hugged me, and I laughed and shook in his clutch, I had for a minute the sense of self-complacency that is supposed to attend the footsteps of the just. Hang it all, making people happy *has* its charms—

"Gilbert, of course, was for celebrating his emancipation in some spectacular manner; but I sent him away alone to explode his emotions, and went to bed to sleep off mine. As I undressed I began to wonder what their after-taste would be—so many of the finest don't keep! Still, I wasn't sorry, and I meant to empty the bottle, even if it *did* turn a trifle flat.

"After I got into bed I lay for a long time smiling at the memory of his eyes—his blissful eyes. . . . Then I fell asleep, and when I woke the room was deathly cold, and I sat up with a jerk—and there were *the other eyes*. . . .

"It was three years since I'd seen them, but I'd thought of them so often that I fancied they could never take me unawares again. Now, with their red sneer on me, I knew that I had never really believed they would come back, and that I was as defenceless as ever against them. . . . As before, it was the insane irrelevance of their coming that made it so horrible. What the deuce were they after, to leap out at me at such a time? I had lived more or less carelessly in the years since I'd seen them, though my worst indiscretions were not dark enough to invite the searchings of their infernal glare; but at this particular

moment I was really in what might have been called a state of grace; and I can't tell you how the fact added to their horror. . . .

"But it's not enough to say they were as bad as before; they were worse. Worse by just so much as I'd learned of life in the interval; by all the damnable implications my wider experience read into them. I saw now what I hadn't seen before; that they were eyes which had grown hideous gradually, which had built up their baseness coral-wise, bit by bit, out of a series of small turpitudes slowly accumulated through the industrious years. Yes—it came to me that what made them so bad was that they'd grown bad so slowly. . . .

"There they hung in the darkness, their swollen lids dropped across the little watery bulbs rolling loose in the orbits, and the puff of flesh making a muddy shadow underneath—and as their stare moved with my movements, there came over me a sense of their tacit complicity, of a deep hidden understanding between us that was worse than the first shock of their strangeness. Not that I understood them, but that they made it so clear that some day I should . . . Yes, that was the worst part of it, decidedly; and it was the feeling that became stronger each time they came back. . . .

"For they got into the damnable habit of coming back. They reminded me of vampires with a taste for young flesh, they seemed so to gloat over the taste of a good conscience. Every night for a month they came to claim their morsel of mine; since I'd made Gilbert happy they simply wouldn't loosen their fangs. The coincidence almost made me hate him, poor lad, fortuitous as I felt it to be. I puzzled over it a good deal, but couldn't find any hint of an explanation except in the chance of his association with Alice Nowell. But then the eyes had let up on me the moment I had abandoned her, so they could hardly be the emissaries of a woman scorned, even if one could have pictured poor Alice charging such spirits to avenge her. That set me thinking, and I began to wonder if they would let up on me if I abandoned Gilbert. The temptation was insidious, and

I had to stiffen myself against it; but really, dear boy! he was too charming to be sacrificed to such demons. And so, after all, I never found out what they wanted. . . ."

III

The fire crumbled, sending up a flash which threw into relief the narrator's gnarled face under its gray-black stubble. Pressed into the hollow of the chairback, it stood out an instant like an intaglio of yellowish red-veined stone, with spots of enamel for the eyes; then the fire sank and it became once more a dim Rembrandtish blur.

Phil Frenham, sitting in a low chair on the opposite side of the hearth, one long arm propped on the table behind him, one hand supporting his thrown-back head, and his eyes fixed on his old friend's face, had not moved since the tale began. He continued to maintain his silent immobility after Culwin had ceased to speak, and it was I who, with a vague sense of disappointment at the sudden drop of the story, finally asked: "But how long did you keep on seeing them?"

Culwin, so sunk into his chair that he seemed like a heap of his own empty clothes, stirred a little, as if in surprise at my question. He appeared to have half-forgotten what he had been telling us.

"How long? Oh, off and on all that winter. It was infernal. I never got used to them. I grew really ill."

Frenham shifted his attitude, and as he did so his elbow struck against a small mirror in a bronze frame standing on the table behind him. He turned and changed its angle slightly; then he resumed his former attitude; his dark head thrown back on his lifted palm, his eyes intent on Culwin's face. Something in his silent gaze embarrassed me, and as if to divert attention from it I pressed on with another question:

"And you never tried sacrificing Noyes?"

"Oh, no. The fact is I didn't have to. He did it for me, poor boy!"

"Did it for you? How do you mean?"

"He wore me out—wore everybody out. He kept on pouring out his lamentable twaddle, and hawking it up and down the place till he became a thing of terror. I tried to wean him from writing—oh, ever so gently, you understand, by throwing him with agreeable people, giving him a chance to make himself felt, to come to a sense of what he *really* had to give. I'd foreseen this solution from the beginning—felt sure that, once the first ardour of authorship was quenched, he'd drop into his place as a charming parasitic thing, the kind of chronic Cherubino for whom, in old societies, there's always a seat at table, and a shelter behind the ladies' skirts. I saw him take his place as 'the poet': the poet who doesn't write. One knows the type in every drawing-room. Living in that way doesn't cost much—I'd worked it all out in my mind, and felt sure that, with a little help, he could manage it for the next few years; and meanwhile he'd be sure to marry. I saw him married to a widow, rather older, with a good cook and a well-run house. And I actually had my eye on the widow. . . . Meanwhile I did everything to help the transition—lent him money to ease his conscience, introduced him to pretty women to make him forget his vows. But nothing would do him; he had but one idea in his beautiful obstinate head. He wanted the laurel and not the rose, and he kept on repeating Gautier's axiom, and battering and filing at his limp prose till he'd spread it out over Lord knows how many hundred pages. Now and then he would send a barrelful to a publisher, and of course it would always come back.

"At first it didn't matter—he thought he was 'misunderstood.' He took the attitudes of genius, and whenever an opus came home he wrote another to keep it company. Then he had a reaction of despair, and accused me of deceiving him, and Lord knows what. I got angry at that, and told him it was he who had deceived himself. He'd come to me determined to write, and I'd done my best to help him. That was the extent of my offence, and I'd done it for his cousin's sake, not his.

"That seemed to strike home, and he didn't answer for a

minute. Then he said: 'My time's up and my money's up. What do you think I'd better do?'

"'I think you'd better not be an ass,' I said.

"'What do you mean by being an ass?' he asked.

I took a letter from my desk and held it out to him.

"'I mean refusing this offer of Mrs. Ellinger's: to be her secretary at a salary of five thousand dollars. There may be a lot more in it than that.'

"He flung out his hand with a violence that struck the letter from mine. 'Oh, I know well enough what's in it!' he said, red to the roots of his hair.

"'And what's the answer, if you know?' I asked.

"He made none at the minute, but turned away slowly to the door. There, with his hand on the threshold, he stopped to say, almost under his breath: 'Then you really think my stuff's no good?'

"I was tired and exasperated, and I laughed. I don't defend my laugh—it was in wretched taste. But I must plead in extenuation that the boy was a fool, and that I'd done my best for him—I really had.

"He went out of the room, shutting the door quietly behind him. That afternoon I left for Frascati, where I'd promised to spend the Sunday with some friends. I was glad to escape from Gilbert, and by the same token, as I learned that night, I had also escaped from the eyes. I dropped into the same lethargic sleep that had come to me before when I left off seeing them; and when I woke the next morning, in my peaceful room above the ilexes, I felt the utter weariness and deep relief that always followed on that sleep. I put in two blessed nights at Frascati; and when I got back to my rooms in Rome I found that Gilbert had gone. . . . Oh, nothing tragic had happened—the episode never rose to *that*. He'd simply packed his manuscripts and left for America—for his family and the Wall Street desk. He left a decent enough note to tell me of his decision, and behaved altogether, in the circumstances, as little like a fool as it's possible for a fool to behave. . . ."

IV

Culwin paused again, and Frenham still sat motionless, the dusky contour of his young head reflected in the mirror at his back.

"And what became of Noyes afterward?" I finally asked, still disquieted by a sense of incompleteness, by the need of some connecting thread between the parallel lines of the tale.

Culwin twitched his shoulders. "Oh, nothing became of him,—because he became nothing. There could be no question of 'becoming' about it. He vegetated in an office, I believe, and finally got a clerkship in a consulate, and married drearily in China. I saw him once in Hong Kong, years afterward. He was fat and hadn't shaved. I was told he drank. He didn't recognize me."

"And the eyes?" I asked, after another pause which Frenham's continued silence made oppressive.

Culwin, stroking his chin, blinked at me meditatively through the shadows. "I never saw them after my last talk with Gilbert. Put two and two together if you can. For my part, I haven't found the link."

He rose, his hands in his pockets, and walked stiffly over to the table on which reviving drinks had been set out.

"You must be parched after this dry tale. Here, help yourself, my dear fellow. Here, Phil——" He turned back to the hearth.

Frenham made no response to his host's hospitable summons. He still sat in his low chair without moving, but as Culwin advanced toward him, their eyes met in a long look; after which the young man, turning suddenly, flung his arms across the table behind him, and dropped his face upon them.

Culwin, at the unexpected gesture, stopped short, a flush on his face.

"Phil—what the deuce? Why, have the eyes scared *you?* My dear boy—my dear fellow—I never had such a tribute to my literary ability, never!"

He broke into a chuckle at the thought, and halted on the hearth-rug, his hands still in his pockets, gazing down at the youth's bowed head. Then, as Frenham still made no answer, he moved a step or two nearer.

"Cheer up, my dear Phil! It's years since I've seen them—apparently. I've done nothing lately bad enough to call them out of chaos. Unless my present evocation of them has made *you* see them; which would be their worst stroke yet!"

His bantering appeal quivered off into an uneasy laugh, and he moved still nearer, bending over Frenham, and laying his gouty hands on the lad's shoulders.

"Phil, my dear boy, really—what's the matter? Why don't you answer? *Have* you seen the eyes?"

Frenham's face was still hidden, and from where I stood behind Culwin I saw the latter, as if under the rebuff of this unaccountable attitude, draw back slowly from his friend. As he did so, the light of the lamp on the table fell full on his congested face, and I caught its reflection in the mirror behind Frenham's head.

Culwin saw the reflection also. He paused, his face level with the mirror, as if scarcely recognizing the countenance in it as his own. But as he looked his expression gradually changed, and for an appreciable space of time he and the image in the glass confronted each other with a glare of slowly gathering hate. Then Culwin let go of Frenham's shoulders, and drew back a step. . . .

Frenham, his face still hidden, did not stir.

WILBUR DANIEL STEELE

Story-writer

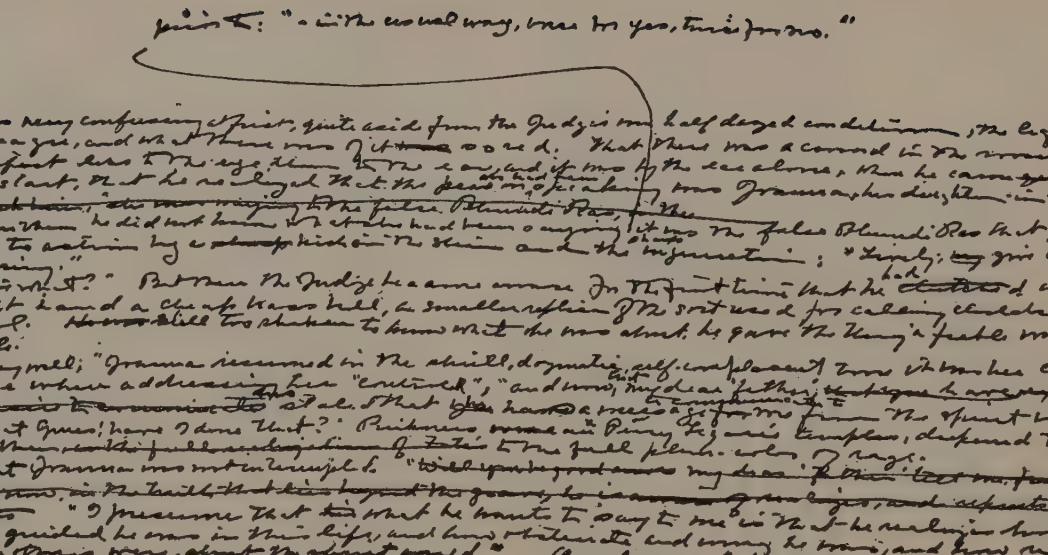
Mr. Steele is the author of several novels and many short stories. One might suppose from the frequency of his contributions and from the number of prize stories he has written, that he likes to write stories. Apparently he does not. Apparently not very many writers do, though they like to think of them as written.

Mr. Steele's interest has not been wholly literary. He has studied at the Museum of Fine Arts at Boston and at the Academie Julian at Paris.

In response to the query sent Mr. Steele concerning his writing habits, he enclosed the following comment, which he had once sent to *Harper's Magazine*.

You ask me to tell why I like to write short stories—in six hundred words, if possible. Lord love you, I can do it in two words: "I don't." And if there's anyone alive who does actually *like* to *write* short stories, either he's a queer one, or else they aren't very good stories.

If you had asked me why I liked *to be about* to write a short story, or why I liked *to have written* one, that would be another thing. There is a time when a tale is a fine and beautiful creature, a masterpiece without flaw, a drama calculated to move one beyond any drama yet written by man; and that is just before you sit down to write it. And there's another time when, if it isn't quite as good as that, yet (some rare times it happens) it's pretty darned good



Facsimile of a page of manuscript from "Can't Cross Jordan by Myself," by Wilbur Daniel Steele, concerning which he says, "for your purposes the most interesting fact about it, I believe, is that not one single word of it remained in the tale in its completed state."

stuff after all; and that time is a year, maybe, or five years, later, when picking it up some day, with the memory worn off a little of the muck and sweat and damnation of its actual getting-together in ink, you read it through as the work of another person, more gifted than you.

But as for the writing of it, the space of from three to six weeks of day-by-day drudgery, worry, and desperate make-shift, is not a thing to enjoy. This is the truth; I'd much rather lay brick.

Or if the accent in the question is on the "*short* stories" —I would say that I like *to have* written them for the reason that I believe it an honester way to write a novel than nine-tenths of the novels are written in this year of Our Lord.

—Wilbur Daniel Steele.

THE MAN WHO SAW THROUGH HEAVEN [1]

People have wondered (there being obviously no question of romance involved) how I could ever have allowed myself to be let in for the East African adventure of Mrs. Diana in search of her husband. There were several reasons. To begin with, the time and effort and money weren't mine; they were the property of the wheel of which I was but a cog, the Society through which Diana's life had been insured, along with the rest of that job-lot of missionaries. The "letting in" was the firm's. In the second place, the wonderers have not counted on Mrs. Diana's capacity for getting things done for her. Meek and helpless. Yes, but God was on her side. Too meek, too helpless to move mountains herself, if those who happened to be handy didn't move them for her then her God would know the reason why. Having dedicated her all to making straight the Way, why should her neighbor cavil at giving a little? The writer for one, a colonial governor general for another, railway magnates, insurance managers, *safari* leaders, the ostrich-farmer of Ndua, all these and a dozen others in their turns have felt the hundred-ton weight of her thin-lipped meekness—have seen her in metaphor sitting grimly on the doorsteps of their souls.

A third reason lay in my own troubled conscience. Though I did it in innocence, I can never forget that it was I who personally conducted Diana's party to the observatory on that fatal night in Boston before it sailed. Had it not been for that kindly intentioned "hunch" of mine, the astounded eye of the Reverend Hubert Diana would never have gazed through the floor of Heaven, he would never have undertaken to measure the Infinite with the foot-rule of his mind.

[1] Reprinted from *Harper's Magazine*, September, 1925, by permission of the author and publishers.

It all started so simply. My boss at the shipping-and-insurance office gave me the word in the morning. "Bunch of missionaries for the *Platonic* to-morrow. They're on our hands in a way. Show 'em the town." It wasn't so easy when you think of it; one male and seven females on their way to the heathen; though it was easier in Boston than it might have been in some other towns. The evening looked the simplest. My friend Krum was at the Observatory that semester; there at least I was sure their sensibilities would come to no harm.

On the way out in the street car, seated opposite to Diana and having to make conversation, I talked of Krum and of what I knew of his work with the spiral nebulae. Having to appear to listen, Diana did so (as all day long) with a vaguely indulgent smile. He really hadn't time for me. That night his life was exalted as it had never been, and would perhaps never be again. Tomorrow's sailing, the actual fact of leaving all to follow Him, held his imagination in thrall. Moreover, he was a bridegroom of three days with his bride beside him, his nerves at once assuaged and thrilled. No, but more. As if a bride were not enough, arrived in Boston, he had found himself surrounded by a very galaxy of womanhood gathered from the four corners; already within hours one felt the chaste tentacles of their feminine dependence curling about the party's unique man; already their contacts with the world of their new lives began to be made through him; already they saw in part through his eyes. I wonder what he would have said if I had told him he was a little drunk.

In the course of the day I think I had got him fairly well. As concerned his Church he was at once an asset and a liability. He believed its dogma as few still did, with a simplicity, "the old-time religion." He was born that kind. Of the stuff of the fanatic, the reason he was not a fanatic was that, curiously impervious to little questionings, he had never been aware that his faith was anywhere attacked. A self-educated man, he had accepted the necessary smattering facts of science with a serene indulgence, as simply so much further proof of what the Crea-

tor could do when He put His Hand to it. Nor was he conscious of any conflict between these facts and the fact that there existed a substantial Heaven, geographically up, and a substantial Hot Place, geographically down.

So, for his Church, he was an asset in these days. And so, and for the same reason, he was a liability. The Church must after all keep abreast of the times. For home consumption, with modern congregations, especially urban ones, a certain streak of "healthy" skepticism is no longer amiss in the pulpit; it makes people who read at all more comfortable in their pews. A man like Hubert Diana is more for the cause than a hundred. But what to do with him? Well, such things arrange themselves. There's the Foreign Field. The blacker the heathen the whiter the light they'll want, and the solider the conception of a God, the Father enthroned in a Heaven of which the sky above them is the visible floor.

And that, at bottom, was what Hubert Diana believed. Accept as he would with the top of his brain the fact of a spherical earth zooming through space, deep in his heart he knew that the world lay flat from modern Illinois to Ancient Palestine, and that the sky above it, blue by day and by night festooned with guiding stars for wise men, was the nether side of a floor on which the resurrected trod. . . .

I shall never forget the expression of his face when he realized he was looking straight through it that night. In the quiet dark of the dome I saw him remove his eye from the eye-piece of the telescope up there on the staging and turn it in the ray of a hooded bulb on the demon's keeper, Krum.

"What's that, Mr. Krum? I didn't get you!"

"I say, that particular cluster you're looking at—"

"This star, you mean?"

"You'd have to count a while to count the stars describing their orbits in that 'star,' Mr. Diana. But what I was saying—have you ever had the wish I used to have as a boy—that you could actually look back into the past? With your own two eyes?"

Diana spoke slowly. He didn't know it, but it had already begun to happen; he was already caught. "I have often wished, Mr. Krum, that I might actually look back into the time of our Lord. Actually. Yes."

Krum grunted. He was young. "We'd have to pick a nearer neighbor than *Messier 79* then. The event you see when you put your eye to that lens is happening much too far in the past. The light-waves thrown off by that particular cluster on the day, say, of the Crucifixion—*you* won't live to see them. They've hardly started yet—a mere twenty centuries on their way—leaving them something like eight hundred and thirty centuries yet to come before they reach the earth."

Diana laughed the queerest catch of a laugh. "And—and there—there won't be any earth here, then, to welcome them."

"*What?*" It was Krum's turn to look startled. So for a moment the two faces remained in confrontation, the one, as I say, startled, the other exuding visibly little sea-green globules of sweat. It was Diana that caved in first, his voice hardly louder than a whisper.

"W-w-will there?"

None of us suspected the enormousness of the thing that had happened in Diana's brain. Krum shrugged his shoulders and snapped his fingers. Deliberately. *Snap!* "What's a thousand centuries or so in the cosmic reckoning?" He chuckled. "We're just beginning to get out among 'em with *Messier*, you know. In the print room, Mr. Diana, I can show you photographs of clusters to which, if you cared to go, traveling at the speed of light—"

The voice ran on; but Diana's eye had gone back to the eye-piece, and his affrighted soul had re-entered the big black tube sticking its snout out of the slit in the iron hemisphere . . . "At the speed of light!" . . . That unsuspected, that wildly chance-found chink in the armor of his philosophy! The body is resurrected and it ascends to Heaven instantaneously. At what speed must it be borne to reach instantaneously that city beyond the ceiling of the sky? At a speed inconceivable, mysti-

cal. At, say (as he had often said to himself) *the speed of light. . . .* And now, hunched there in the trap that had caught him, black rods, infernal levers and wheels, he was aware of his own eye passing vividly through unpartitioned emptiness, *eight hundred and fifty centuries at the speed of light!*

"And still beyond these," Krum was heard, "we begin to come into the regions of the spiral nebulae. We've some interesting photographs in the print room, if you've the time."

The ladies below were tired of waiting. One had "lots of packing to do." The bride said, "Yes, I do think we should be getting along. Hubert, dear; if you're ready—"

The fellow actually jumped. It's lucky he didn't break anything. His face looked greener and dewier than ever amid the contraptions above. "If you—you and the ladies, Cora—wouldn't mind—if Mr.—Mr.—(he'd mislaid my name) would see you back to the hotel—" Meeting silence, he began to expostulate. "I feel that this is a rich experience. I'll follow shortly; I know the way."

In the car going back into the city Mrs. Diana set at rest the flutterings of six hearts. Being unmarried, they couldn't understand men as she did. When I think of that face of hers, to which I was to grow only too accustomed in the weary, itchy days of the trek into Kavirondoland, with its slightly tilted nose, its irregular pigmentation, its easily inflamed lids, and the long moist cheeks, like a hunting dog, glorying in weariness, it seems incredible that a light of coyness could have found lodgment there. But that night it did. She sat serene among her virgins.

"You don't know Bert. You wait; he'll get a perfectly wonderful sermon out of that to-night, Bert will."

Krum was having a grand time with his neophyte. He would have stayed up all night. Immured in the little print room crowded with files and redolent of acids, he conducted his disciple "glassy-eyed" through the dim frontiers of space, holding before him one after another the likenesses of universes sister to our own, islanded in immeasurable vacancy, curled like glimmering crullers on their private Milky Ways, and hiding in their

wombs their myriad "coal-pockets," star-dust foetuses of which—their quadrillion years accomplished—their litters of new suns would be born, to bear their planets, to bear their moons in turn.

"And beyond these?"

Always, after each new feat of distance, it was the same. "And beyond?" Given an ell, Diana surrendered to a pop-eyed lust for nothing less than light-years. "And still beyond?"

"Who knows?"

"The mind quits. For if there's no end to these nebulae—"

"But supposing there is?"

"An end? But Mr. Krum, in the very idea of an ending—"

"An end to what we might call this particular category of magnitudes. Eh?"

"I don't get that."

"Well, take this—take the opal in your ring there. The numbers and distances inside that stone may conceivably be to themselves as staggering as ours to us in our own system. Come! that's not so far-fetched. What are we learning about the structure of the atom? A nucleus (call it a sun) revolved about in eternal orbits by electrons (call them planets, worlds). Infinitesimal; but after all what are bigness and littleness but matters of comparison? To eyes on one of those electrons (don't be too sure there aren't any) its tutelary sun may flame its way across a heaven a comparative ninety million miles away. Impossible for them to conceive of a boundary to their billions of atomic systems, molecular universes. In that category of magnitudes its diameter is infinity; once it has made the leap into our category and become an opal it is merely a quarter of an inch. That's right, Mr. Diana, you may well stare at it: between *now* and *now* ten thousand histories may have come and gone down there. . . . And just so the diameter of our own cluster of universes, going over into another category, may be—"

"May be a—ring—a little stone—in a—a—a—ring."

Krum was tickled by the way the man's imagination jumped and engulfed it.

"Why not? That's as good a guess as the next. A ring, let's say, worn carelessly on the—well, say the tentacle—of some vast organism—some inchoate creature hobnobbing with its cloudy kind in another system of universes—which in turn—"

It is curious that none of them realized next day that they were dealing with a stranger, a changed man. Why he carried on, why he capped that night of cosmic debauch by shaving, eating an unremarkable breakfast, packing his terrestrial tooth brush and collars, and going up the gangplank in tow of his excited convoy to sail away, is beyond explanation—unless it was simply that he was in a daze.

It wasn't until four years later that I was allowed to know what had happened on that ship, and even then the tale was so disjointed, warped, and opinionated, so darkly seen in the mirror of Mrs. Diana's orthodoxy, that I had almost to guess what it *really* was all about.

"When Hubert turned irreligious. . . ." That phrase, recurrent on her tongue in the meanderings of the East African quest to which we were by then committed, will serve to measure her understanding. Irreligious! Good Lord! But from that sort of thing I had to reconstruct the drama. Evening after evening beside her camp fire (appended to the Mineral Survey Expedition Toward Uganda through the kindness—actually the worn-down surrender—of the Protectorate government) I lingered a while before joining the merrier engineers, watched with fascination the bumps growing under the mosquitoes on her forehead, and listened to the jargon of her mortified meekness and her scandalized faith.

There had been a fatal circumstance, it seems, at the very outset. If Diana could but have been seasick, as the rest of them were (horribly), all might still have been well. In the misery of desired death, along with the other contents of a heaving midriff, he might have brought up the assorted universes of which he had been led too rashly to partake. But he

wasn't. As if his wife's theory was right, as if Satan was looking out for him, he was spared to prowl the swooping decks immune. Four days and nights alone. Time enough to digest and assimilate into his being beyond remedy that lump of whirling magnitudes and to feel himself surrendering with a strange new ecstacy to the drunkenness of liberty.

Such liberty! Given Diana's type, it is hard to imagine it adequately. The abrupt, complete removal of the toils of reward and punishment; the withdrawal of the surveillance of an all-seeing, all-knowing Eye; the windy assurance of being responsible for nothing, important to no one, no longer (as the police say) "wanted!" It must have been beautiful in those few days of its first purity, before it began to be discolored by his contemptuous pity for others, the mask of his inevitable loneliness and his growing fright.

The first any of them knew of it—even his wife—was in mid-voyage, the day the sea went down and the seven who had been sick came up. There seemed an especial Providence in the calming of the waters; it was Sunday morning and Diana had been asked to conduct the services.

He preached on the text: "For of such is the kingdom of Heaven."

"If our concept of God means anything it means a God *all*-mighty, Creator of *all* that exists, Director of the *infinite*, cherishing in His Heaven the saved souls of *all space and all time*."

Of course; amen. And wasn't it nice to feel like humans again, and real sunshine pouring up through the lounge ports from an ocean suddenly grown kind. . . . But—then—*what* was Diana *saying?*

Mrs. Diana couldn't tell about it coherently even after a lapse of fifty months. Even in a setting as remote from that steamer's lounge as the equatorial bush, the ember-reddened canopy of thorn trees, the meandering camp fires, the chant and tramp somewhere away of Kikuyu porters dancing in honor of an especial largesse of fat zebra meat—even here her memory of that impious outburst was too vivid, too aghast.

"It was Hubert's look! The way he stared at us! As if you'd said he was licking his chops! . . . That *Heaven* of his."

It seems they hadn't waked up to what he was about until he had the dimensions of his sardonic Paradise irreparably drawn in. The final haven of all right souls. Not alone the souls released from this our own tiny earth. In the millions of solar systems we see as stars how many millions of satellites must there be upon which at some time in their histories conditions suited to organic life subsist? Uncounted hordes of wheeling populations! Of men? God's creatures at all events, a portion of them reasoning. Weirdly shaped perhaps, but what of that? And that's only to speak of our own inconsiderable cluster of universes. That's to say nothing of other systems of magnitudes, where God's creatures are to our world what we are to the world's in the atoms in our finger-rings. (He had shaken *his*, here, in their astounded faces.) And all these, all the generations of these enormous and microscopic beings harvested through a time beside which the life-span of our earth is as a second in a million centuries: all these brought to rest for an eternity to which time itself is a watch-tick—all crowded to rest pell-mell, thronged, serried, packed, packed to suffocation in layers unnumbered light-years deep. This must needs be our concept of Heaven if God is the God of the Whole. If, on the other hand—

The other hand was the hand of the second officer, the captain's delegate at divine worship that Sabbath day. He at last had "come to."

I don't know whether it was the same day or the next; Mrs. Diana was too vague. But here's the picture. Seven women huddled in the large stateroom on B-deck, conferring in whispers, aghast, searching one another's eyes obliquely even as they bowed their heads in prayer for some light—and of a sudden the putting back of the door and the inmarching of the Reverend Hubert. . . .

As Mrs. Diana tried to tell me, "You understand, don't you, he had just taken a bath? And he hadn't—he had forgotten to—"

Adam-innocent there he stood. Not a stitch. But I don't believe for a minute it was a matter of forgetting. In the high intoxication of his soul-release, already crossed (by the second officer) and beginning to show his zealot claws, he needed some gesture stunning enough to witness to his separation, his unique rightness, his contempt of match-flare civilizations and infinitesimal taboos.

But I can imagine that stateroom scene: the gasps, the heads colliding in aversion, and Diana's six weedy feet of birthday-suit towering in the shadows, and ready to sink through the deck I'll warrant, now the act was irrevocable, but still grimly carrying it off.

"And if, on the other hand, you ask me to bow down before a God peculiar to this one earth, this one grain of dust lost among the giants of space, watching its sparrows fall, profoundly interested in a speck called Palestine no bigger than the quadrillionth part of one of the atoms in the ring here on my finger—"

Really scared by this time, one of the virgins shrieked. It was altogether too close quarters with a madman.

Mad? Of course there was the presumption: "Crazy as a loon." Even legally it was so adjudged at the *Platonic's* first port-of-call, Algiers, where, when Diana escaped ashore and wouldn't come back again, he had to be given over to the workings of the French Law. I talked with the magistrate myself some forty months later, when, "let in" for the business as I have told, I stopped there on my way out.

"But what would you?" were his words. "We must live in the world as the world lives, is it not?" Sanity? Sanity is what? Is it, for example, an intellectual clarity, a balanced perception of the realities? Naturally, speaking out of court, your friend was of a sanity—of a sanity, sir—" Here the magistrate made with thumb and fingers the gesture only the French can make for a thing that is matchless, a beauty, a transcendent instance of any kind. He himself was Gallic, rational. Then, with a lift of shoulder, "But what would you? We must live in the world that seems."

Diana, impounded in Algiers for deportation, escaped. What after all are the locks and keys of this pinchbeck category of magnitudes? More remarkable still, there in Arab Africa, he succeeded in vanishing from the knowledge and pursuit of men. And of women. His bride, now that their particular mission had fallen through, was left to decide whether to return to America or to go on with two of the company, the Misses Brookhart and Smutts, who were bound for a school in Smyrna. In the end she followed the latter course. It was there nearly four years later, that I was sent to join her by an exasperated and worn-out Firm.

But that time she knew again where her husband-errant was—or where at least, from time to time in his starry dartings over this our mote of dust, he had been heard of, spoken to, seen.

Could we but have a written history of those years of his apostolic vagabondage, a record of the towns in which he was jailed or from which he was kicked out, of the ports in which he stowed away, presently to reveal himself in proselyting ardor, denouncing the earthlings, the fatelings, the dupes of bugaboo, meeting scoff with scoff, preaching the new revelation red-eyed, like an angry prophet. Or was it, more simply, like a man afraid?

Was that the secret, after all, of his prodigious restlessness? Had it anything in common with the swarming of those pale worms that flee the Eye of the Infinite around the curves of the stone you pick up in a field? Talk of the man without a country! What of the man without a universe?

It is curious that I never suspected his soul's dilemma until I saw the first of his mud-sculptures in the native village of Ndua in the province of Kasuma in British East. Here it was, our objective attained, we parted company with the government *safari* and shifted the burden of Way-straightening to the shoulders of Major Wyeside, the ostrich-farmer of the neighborhood.

While still on the *safari* I had put to Mrs. Diana a question that had bothered me: "Why on earth should your husband ever have chosen this particular neck of the woods to land up in? Why Kavirondoland?"

"It was here we were coming at the time Hubert turned irreligious, to found a mission. It's a coincidence, isn't it?"

And yet I would have sworn Diana hadn't a sense of humor about him anywhere. But perhaps it *wasn't* an ironic act. Perhaps it was simply that, giving up the struggle with a society blinded by "a little learning" and casting about for a virgin field, he had remembered this.

"I supposed he was a missionary," Major Wyeside told us with a flavor of indignation. "I went on that. I let him live here—six or seven months of it—while he was learning the tongue. I was a bit nonplused, to put it mildly, when I discovered what he was up to."

What things Diana had been up to the Major showed us in one of the huts in the native kraal—a round dozen of them, modeled in mud and baked. Blackened blobs of mud, that's all. Likenesses of nothing under the sun, fortuitous masses sprouting haphazard tentacles, only two among them showing postules that might have been experimental heads. . . . The ostrich-farmer saw our faces.

"Rum, eh? Of course I realized the chap was anything but fit. A walking skeleton. Nevertheless, whatever it is about these beasties, there's not a nigger in the village has dared set foot inside this hut since Diana left. You can see for yourselves it's about to crash. There's another like it he left at Suki, above here. Taboo, no end!"

So Diana's "hunch" had been right. He had found his virgin field indeed, fit soul for his cosmic fright. A religion in the making, here before our eyes.

"This was at the very last before he left," Wyeside explained. "He took to making these mud-pies quite of a sudden; the whole lot within a fortnight's time. Before that he had simply talked, harangued. He would sit here in the doorway of an evening with the niggers squatted around and harangue 'em by the hour. I knew something of it through my house-boys. The most amazing rot. All about the stars to begin with, as if these black baboons could half grasp *astronomy!* But that seemed

all proper. Then there was talk about a something a hundred times as big and powerful as the world, sun, moon, and stars put together—some perfectly enormous stupendous awful being—but knowing how mixed the boys can get, it still seemed all regular—simply the parson's way of getting at the notion of an Almighty God. But no, they insisted, there wasn't any God. That's the point, they said; there *is no* God. . . . Well, that impressed me as a go. That's when I decided to come down and get the rights of this star-swallowing monstrosity the beggar was feeding my labor on. And here he sat in the doorway with one of these beasties—here it is, this one—waving it furiously in the niggers' benighted faces. And do you know what he's done? —you can see the mark here still on this wabble-leg, this tentacle-business—he had taken off a ring he had and screwed it on just here. His finger ring, my word of honor! And still, if you believe it, I didn't realize he was just daft. Not until he spoke to me. 'I find,' he was good enough to enlighten me, 'I find I have to make it somehow concrete.' . . . 'Make what?' . . . 'Our wearer' . . . 'Our *what*, *where?*' . . . 'In the following category.' . . . His actual words, honor bright. I was going to have him sent down-country where he could be looked after. He got ahead of me though. He cleared out. When I heard he'd turned up at Suki I ought, I suppose, to have attended to it. But I was having trouble with leopards. And you know how things go."

From there we went to Suki, the Major accompanying me. It was as like Ndua as one flea to its brother, a stockade inclosing round houses of mud, wattles, and thatch, and full of naked heathen. The Kavirondo are the nakedest of all African peoples and, it is said, the most moral. It put a great strain on Mrs. Diana; all that whole difficult anxious time, as it were detachedly, I could see her itching to get them into Mother Hubbards and cast-off Iowa pants.

Here too, as the Major had promised, we found a holy of holies, rather a dreadful of dreadfuls, "taboo no end." Its shadows cluttered with the hurlothrumbos of Diana's artistry.

What puzzled me was their number. Why this appetite for experimentation? There was an uncertainty; one would think its effect on potential converts would be bad. Here, as in Ndua, Diana had contented himself at first with words and skyward gesticulations. Not for so long however. Feeling the need of giving his concept of the cosmic "wearer" a substance much earlier, he had shut himself in with the work, literally—a fever of creation. We counted seventeen of the nameless "blobs," all done, we were told, in the seven days and nights before their maker had again cleared out. The villagers would hardly speak of him; only after spitting, their eyes averted, and in an undertone, would they mention him: "He of the Ring." Thereafter we were to hear of him only as "He of the Ring."

Leaving Suki, Major Wyeside turned us over (thankfully, I warrant) to a native who told us his name was Charlie Kamba. He had spent some years in Nairobi, running for an Indiana outfitter, and spoke English remarkably well. It was from him we learned, quite casually, when our modest eight-load *safari* was some miles on its way, that the primary object of our coming was non-existent. Hubert Diana was dead.

Dead nearly five weeks—a moon and a little—and buried in the mission church of Tara Hill.

Mission church! There was a poser for us. *Mission church?*

Well then, Charlie Kamba gave us to know that he was paraphrasing in a large way suitable to our habits of thought. We shouldn't have understood *his* informant's "wizard house" or "house of the effigy."

I will say for Mrs. Diana that in the course of our halt of lugubrious amazement she shed tears. That some of them were not tears of unrealized relief it would be hardly natural to believe. She had desired loyally to find her husband, but when she should have found him—what? This problem, sturdily ignored so long, was now removed.

Turn back? Never! Now it would seem the necessity for pressing forward was doubled. In the scrub-fringed ravine of our halt the porters resumed their loads, the dust stood up

again, the same caravan moved on. But how far it was now from being the same.

From that moment it took on, for me at least, a new character. It wasn't the news especially; the fact that Diana was dead had little to do with it. Perhaps it was simply that the new sense of something aimfully and cumulatively dramatic in our progress had to have a beginning, and that moment would do as well as the next.

Six villages: M'nann, Leika, Leikapo, Shamba, Little Tara, and Tara, culminating in the apotheosis of Tara Hill. Six stops for the night on the road it had cost Diana as many months to cover in his singular pilgrimage to his inevitable goal. Or in his flight to it. Yes, his stampede. Now the pipers at that four-day orgy of liberty on the *Platonic's* decks were at his heels for their pay. Now that his strength was failing, the hosts of loneliness were after him, creeping out of their dreadful magnitudes, hounds of space. Over all that ground it seemed to me we were following him not by the word of hearsay but, as one follows a wounded animal making for its earth, by the droppings of his blood.

Our progress had taken on a pattern; it built itself with a dramatic artistry; it gathered suspense. As though it were a story at its most breathless places "continued in our next," and I a reader forgetting the road's weariness, the dust, the torment of insects never escaped, the inadequate food, I found myself hardly able to keep from running on ahead to reach the evening's village, to search out the inevitable repository of images left by the white stranger who had come and tarried there awhile and gone again.

More concrete and ever more concrete. The immemorial compromise with the human hunger for a symbol to see with the eyes, touch with the hands. Hierarchy after hierarchy of little mud effigies—one could see the necessity pushing the man. Out of the protoplasmic blobs of Ndua, Suki, even M'nann, at Leikapo Diana's concept of infinity (so pure in that halcyon epoch at sea), of categories nested within categories like Japa-

nese boxes, of an over-creature wearing our cosmos like a trinket, unawares, had become a mass with legs to stand on and a real head. The shards scattered about in the filth of the hut there (as if in violence of despair) were still monstrosities, but with a sudden stride of concession their monstrousness was the monstrousness of lizard and turtle and crocodile. At Shamba there were dozens of huge-footed birds.

It is hard to be sure in retrospect, but I do believe that by the time we reached Little Tara I began to see the thing as a whole—the foetus, working out slowly, blindly, but surely, its evolution in the womb of fright. At Little Tara there was a change in the character of the exhibits; their numbers had diminished, their size had grown. There was a boar with tusks and a bull the size of a dog with horns, and on a tusk and on a horn an indentation left by a ring.

I don't believe Mrs. Diana got the things at all. Toward the last she wasn't interested in the huts of relics; at Little Tara she wouldn't go near the place; she was "too tired." It must have been pretty awful, when you think of it, even if all she saw in them was the mud-pie play of a man reverted to a child.

There was another thing at Little Tara quite as momentous as the jump to boar and bull. Here at last a mask had been thrown aside. Here there had been no pretense of proselyting, no astronomical lectures, no doorway harangues. Straightway he had arrived (a fabulous figure already, long heralded) he had commandeered a house and shut himself up in it and there, mysterious, assiduous, he had remained three days and nights, eating nothing, but drinking gallons of the foul water they left in gourds outside his curtain of reeds. No one in the village had ever seen what he had done and left there. Now, candidly, those labors were for himself alone.

Here at last in Tara the moment of that confession, had overtaken the fugitive. It was he, ill with fever and dying of nostalgia—not these naked black baboon men seen now as little more than blurs—who had to give the Beast of the Infinite a name and a shape. And more and more, not only a shape, but a

shapeliness. From the instant when, no longer able to live alone with nothingness, he had given it a likeness in Ndua mud, and perceived that it was intolerable and fled its face, the turtles and distorted crocodiles of Leikapo and the birds of Shamba had become inevitable, and no less inevitable the Little Tara boar and bull. Another thing grows plain in retrospect: the reason why, done to death (as all the way they reported him) he couldn't die. He didn't dare to. Didn't dare to close his eyes.

It was at Little Tara we first heard of him as "Father Witch," a name come back, we were told, from Tara, where he had gone. I had heard it pronounced several times before it suddenly obtruded from the native context as actually two English words. That was what made it queer. It was something they must have picked up by rote, uncomprehending; something then they could have had from no lips but his own. When I repeated it after them with a better accent they pointed up toward the north, saying "Tara! Tara!"—their eagerness mingled with awe.

I shall never forget Tara as we saw it, after our last blistering scramble up a gorge, situated in the clear air on a slope belted with cedars. A mid-African stockade left by some blunder in an honest Colorado landscape, or a newer and bigger Vermont. Here at the top of our journey, black savages, their untidy *shambas*, the very Equator, all these seemed as incongruous as a Gothic cathedral in a Congo marsh. I wonder if Hubert Diana knew whither his instinct was guiding him on the long road of his journey here to die. . . .

He had died and he was buried, not in the village, but about half a mile distant, on the ridge; this we were given to know almost before we had arrived. There was no need to announce ourselves, the word of our coming had outrun us; the populace was at the gates.

"Our Father Witch! Our Father Witch!" They knew what we were after; the funny parrot-wise English stood out from the clack and clatter of their excited speech. "Our Father Witch! Ay! Ay!" With a common eagerness they gesticulated at the hilltop beyond the cedars.

Certainly here was a change. No longer the propitiatory spitting, the averted eyes, the uneasy whispering allusion to him who had passed that way: here in Tara they would shout him from the housetops, with a kind of civic pride.

We learned the reason for this on our way up the hill. It was because they were his chosen, the initiate.

We made the ascent immediately, against the village's advice. It was near evening; the return would be in the dark; it was bad lion country; wouldn't to-morrow morning do? . . . No, it wouldn't do the widow. Her face was set. . . . And, so, since we were resolved to go, the village went with us, armed with spears and rattles and drums. Charlie Kamba walked beside us, sifting the information a hundred were eager to give.

These people were proud, he said, because their wizard was more powerful than all the wizards of all the other villages "in the everywhere together." If he cared to he could easily knock down all the other villages in the "everywhere," destroying all the people and all the cattle. If he cared to he could open his mouth and swallow the sky and the stars. But Tara he had chosen. Tara he would protect. He made their mealies to grow and their cattle to multiply.

I protested, "But he is *dead* now!"

Charlie Kamba made signs of deprecation. I discerned that he was far from clear about the thing himself.

Yes, he temporized, this Father Witch was dead, quite dead. On the other hand he was up there. On the other hand he would never die. He was longer than forever. Yes, quite true, he was dead and buried under the pot.

I gave it up. "How did he die?"

Well, he came to this village of Tara very suffering, very sick. The dead man who walked. His face was very sad. Very eaten. Very frightened. He came to this hill. So he lived here for two full moons, very hot, very eaten, very dead. These men made him a house as he commanded them, also a stockade. In the house he was very quiet, very dead, making magic two full moons. Then he came out and they that were waiting saw him.

He had made the magic, and the magic had made him well. His face was kind. He was happy. He was full fed. He was full fed, these men said, without any eating. Yes, they carried up to him very fine food, because they were full of wonder and some fear, but he did not eat any of it. Some water he drank. So, for two days and the night between them, he continued sitting in the gate of the stockade, very happy, very full fed. He told these people very much about their wizard, who is bigger than everywhere and longer than forever and can, if he cares to, swallow the sky and stars. From time to time however, ceasing to talk to these people, he got to his knees and talked in his own strange tongue to Our Father Witch, his eyes held shut. When he had done this just at sunset of the second day he fell forward on his face. So he remained that night. The next day these men took him into the house and buried him under the pot. On the other hand our Father Witch is longer than forever. He remains there still. . . .

The first thing I saw in the hut's interior was the earthen pot at the northern end, wrong-side-up on the ground. I was glad I had preceded Mrs. Diana. I walked across and sat down on it carelessly, hoping so that her afflicted curiosity might be led astray. It gave me the oddest feeling, though, to think of what was there beneath my nonchalant sitting-portion—aware as I was of the Kavirondo burial of a great man—up to the neck in mother earth, and the rest of him left out in the dark of the pot for the undertakings of the ants. I hoped his widow wouldn't wonder about that inverted vessel of clay.

I needn't have worried. Her attention was arrested otherwheres. I shall not forget the look of her face, caught above me in the red shaft of the sundown entering the western door, as she gazed at the last and the largest of the Reverend Hubert Diana's gods. That long, long cheek of hers, buffeted by sorrow, startled now, and mortified. Not till that moment, I believe, had she comprehended the steps of mud-images she had been following for what they were, the steps of idolatry.

For my part, I wasn't startled. Even before we started up

the hill, knowing that her husband had dared to die here, I could have told her pretty much what she would find.

This overlord of the cosmic categories that he had fashioned (at last) in his own image sat at the other end of the red-streaked house upon a bench—a throne?—of mud. Diana had been no artist. An ovoid two-eyed head, a cylindrical trunk, two arms, two legs, that's all. But indubitably man, man-size. Only one finger of one of the hands had been done with much care. It wore an opal, a two-dollar stone from Mexico, set in a silver ring. This was the hand that was lifted, and over it the head was bent.

I've said Diana was no artist. I'll take back the words. The figure was crudeness itself, but in the relation between that bent head and that lifted hand there was something which was something else. A sense of scrutiny one would have said no genius of mud could ever have conveyed. An attitude of interest centered in that bauble, intense and static, breathless and eternal all in one—penetrating to its bottom atom, to the last electron, to a hill upon it, and to a two-legged mite about to die. Marking (yes, I'll swear to the incredible) the sparrow's fall.

The magic was made. The road that had commenced with the blobs of Ndua—the same that commenced with our hairy ancestors listening to the nightwind in their caves—was run.

And from here Diana, of a sudden happy, of a sudden looked after, "full fed," had walked out—

But no; I couldn't stand that mortified sorrow on the widow's face any longer. She had to be made to see. I said it aloud:

"From here, Mrs. Diana, your husband walked out—"

"He had sunk to idolatry. *Idolatry!*"

"To the bottom, yes. And come up its whole history again. And from here he walked out into the sunshine to kneel and talk with "Our Father Which—"

She got it. She caught it. I wish you could have seen the light going up those long, long cheeks as she got it:

"Our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name!"

We went down hill in the darkness, convoyed by a vast rattling of gourds and beating of goat-hide drums.

FREDERICK STUART GREENE

Short-story writer

Mr. Greene is an example of the busy man-of-affairs who finds time for recreation in writing. He has the ability to perform the daily tasks of his vocation and then write short-stories of good quality. He is a graduate of the Virginia Military Institute with a degree of Civil Engineer. The history of his rapid rise to positions of increasing importance cannot be recorded here. Suffice it to say that for several years he has been Superintendent of Public Works in the state of New York.

In his letter he emphasizes certain essentials for good writing and the practical importance of writing well for the literary market.

"The difference between ordinary and good writing is that the former means drab accomplishment with one's work appearing in 'wood pulp' magazines at one cent a word, while good writing gives that intense satisfaction which follows a worth-while effort and, incidentally, one's story is printed in the first-class magazines at from $500 to $2000. Without a knowledge of rhetoric, good writing is impossible; this does not mean, however, that rhetoric without writing ability will produce an acceptable story.

"In my opinion, the most essential things in any story are: First, something worth writing about, a plot which will interest. Second, the author must then make his characters live, make them natural human beings, frequently

doing surprising and original things, but always in a human way. Third, while conversation between characters must be speeded up in cleverness at least fifty per cent above ordinary conversation, still an artist can and must do this speeding up without making his characters appear unnatural. Local color is the fourth essential in a good short story; this must be true and it must not be given too much space.

"Woven into the mesh of these four essentials is always that important thing, economy of words. Economy is not so essential in a novel, but in a short story ten unnecessary words will make the reader feel that the action of the story has been retarded a half-hour. Against this economy, one must be careful not to write too abruptly or to make the tempo too staccato. Rhythm in sentences must be secured but it must be held by using the proper words, and here you again meet rhetoric.

"My method is to sit down and write everything that comes into my head. A story which finally goes to the editor of about 7,500 words was first written in not less than 10,000 words. On the first rewriting, I throw out the less essential paragraphs; on the second, sentences; on the third, phrases; on the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth, writing, I polish and eliminate unnecessary words and put in better words for those first used.

"You speak of an inspiration to write. As Fannie Hurst once said: 'Good writing is not inspiration, it is perspiration.' If any of your students sit down to wait for an inspiration to come, he will wear out the seat of his trousers before he has written his first short story. The best way to begin is to write not less than one thousand words every day even though the next day one tears up what has been done. But the more one writes the easier the work will become, and the more one will want to write.

"Before I took my present position with the State I carried a notebook in my pocket and while riding on street cars or subways I used to write a description of the people sitting about me, and try to look beneath their faces to read character. I also wrote descriptions of emotions or places even though I had no use for the particular thing at the time. In the same way, if I saw unusual names I would note them for possible use in some future story.

"I have known people who have made at least a considerable financial success by writing, who had no more real talent for writing than a color-blind man could have for painting; but by persistence and constantly thinking of their subject they became at least skilled mechanics if not artists.

"You ask me to give you an example of some of the things I consider above the average in my own work. I write so simply and without any real style that this request is hard to fulfill, but the following are some of the sentences that rather appeal to me:—

"From 'The Cat of the Cane-Brake': A description showing the contrast between the upland and the swamps of southern Alabama:

Here began the pine woods, the one saving touch nature has given to this land. Beneath the grateful shade she hastened her steps. The trees stood in endless disordered ranks, rising straight and bare of branch until high aloft their spreading tops caught the sunlight.

A quarter of a mile brought her to the lowland. She went down the slight decline and stepped within the cane-brake. Here gloom closed about her. The thickly growing cane reached to twice her height. Above the cane the cypress spread its branches, draped with the sad, gray moss of the South. No sun's rays struggled through the rank foliage to lighten the sodden earth beneath. Sally picked her way slowly through the swamp, peering cautiously beyond each fallen log before venturing a further step. Crawfish scuttled backward from her path to slip down the mud chimneys of their homes. The bleak earth and decaying plants filled the hot still air with noisome odors. Thou-

sands of hidden insects sounded through the dank stretches their grating calls. Slimy water oozed from beneath the heavy soles of her brogans, green and purple bubbles were left in each foot-print, bubbles with iridescent oily skins.

"From the same story: Transition to denote the passing of time, instead of using the old worn-out 'time passed':

The night marched on to the sound of a million voices calling shrilly through the gloom.

"From 'The Bunker Mouse': Describing the shore front of New York City on an afternoon before a storm:

When Larry heard the door close creakily behind him, he looked back to where Mary had stood, his eyes blinking rapidly. After some moments he walked slowly on toward the wharves. In the distance before him the spars and funnels of ships loomed through the dusk, their outlines rapidly fading into the sky beyond—a late September sky, now fast turning to a burned-out sheet of dull gray.

"From the same story:—Describing the sea after the hurricane had passed:

The sun rose the next day in a cloudless sky, and shone on a brilliant sea of tumbling, white-capped waves. Far off the starboard bow floated a thin line of smoke from the tug's funnel, the first sign to the crew since the hurricane that the world was not swept clean of ships. Two hours later the tug was standing by, her captain hailing the *San Gardo* through a megaphone.

"Run in to New Orleans!" he shouted.

"I cleared for Galveston, and I'm going there," the *San Gardo's* captain called back.

"No, you ain't neither."

"I'd like to know why I won't."

"Because you can't,"—the answer carried distinctly across the waves,—"there ain't no such place. It's been washed clean off the earth."

The *San Gardo* swung farther to the west and with her engine pounding at every stroke, limped on toward the Mississippi."

—Frederick Stuart Greene.

THE BUNKER MOUSE [1]

Larry Walsh slowly climbed the stairs of a house near the waterfront, in a run-down quarter of old New York. He halted on the top floor, blinking the dim light that struggled through the grime-coated window of the hallway. After a time he knocked timidly on the door before him.

There was nothing in the pleasant "Come in" to alarm the small man; he started to retreat, but stopped when the door was thrown wide.

"Then it's yourself, Mouse! It's good for the eyes just to look at you."

The woman who greeted Walsh was in striking contrast to her shabby surroundings. Everything about the old-fashioned house, one floor of which was her home, spoke of neglected age. This girl, from the heavy, black braids encircling her head to the soles of her shoes, vibrated youth. Her cheeks glowed with the color of splendid health; her blue Irish eyes were bright with it. Friendliness had rung in the tones of her rich brogue, and showed now in her smile as she waited for her visitor to answer.

Larry stood before her too shy to speak.

"Is it word from Dan you're bringin' me?" she encouraged. "But there, now, I'm forgettin' me manners! Come in, and I'll be makin' you a cup of tea." She took his arm impulsively, with the frank comradeship of a young woman for a man much older than herself, and led him to a chair.

Larry sat ready for flight, his cap held stiffly across his knees. He watched every movement of the girl, a look of pathetic meekness in his eyes.

"You're right, Mrs. Sullivan," he said after an effort; "Dan was askin' me to step in on my way to the ship."

She turned quickly from the stove.

[1] Reprinted from *The Century Magazine* by permission of the publishers.

"You're not tellin' me now Dan ain't comin' himself, an' the boat leavin' this night?"

Larry was plainly uneasy.

"Well, you see—it's—now it's just like I'm tellin' you, Mrs. Sullivan; he's that important to the chief, is Dan, they can't get on without him to-day at all."

"Then bad luck, I say, to the chief! Look at the grand supper I'm after fixin' for Dan!"

"Oh, Mary—Mrs. Sullivan, don't be speakin' disrespectful' of the chief, an' him thinkin' so highly of Dan!"

Mary's blue eyes flashed.

"An' why wouldn't he! It's not every day he'll find the likes of Dan, with the strong arms and the great legs of him, not to mention his grand looks." She crossed to Larry, her face aglow. "Rest easy now while you drink your tea," she urged kindly, "an' tell me what the chief be wantin' him for."

She drew her chair close to Larry, but the small man turned shyly from her searching gaze.

"Well, you see, Mrs.—"

"Call me Mary. It's a year an' more now since the first time you brought Dan home to me." A sudden smile lighted her face. "Well I remember how frightened you looked when first you set eyes on me. Was you thinkin' to find Dan's wife a slip of a girl?'

"No; he told me you was a fine, big lass." He looked from Mary to the picture of an older woman that hung above the mantel. "That'll be your mother, I'm thinkin'." Then, with abrupt change, "When did you leave the old country, Mary?"

"A little more'n a year before I married Dan. But tell me, Mouse, about the chief wantin' him."

"Well, you see, Dan's that handy-like—"

"That's the blessed truth you're speakin'," she interrupted, her face lovely with its flush of pride. "But tell me more, that's a darlin'."

Larry thought rapidly before he spoke again.

"Only the last trip I was hearin' the chief say: 'Dan,' says

he, 'it's not long now you'll be swingin' the shovel. I'll be makin' you water-tender soon.' "

Mary leaned nearer, and caught both of Larry's hands in hers.

"Them's grand words you're sayin'; they fair makes my heart jump." She paused; the gladness faded quickly from her look. "Then the chief don't know Dan sometimes takes a drop?"

"Ain't the chief himself Irish? Every man on the boilers takes his dram." Her wistful eyes spurred him on. "Sure's I'm sittin' here, Dan's the soberest of the lot."

Mary shook her head sadly.

"Good reason I have to fear the drink; 't was that spoiled my mother's life."

Larry rose quickly.

"Your mother never drank!"

"No; the saints preserve us!" She looked up in surprise at Larry's startled face. "It was my father. I don't remember only what mother told me; he left her one night, ravin' drunk, an' never come back."

Larry hastily took up his cap.

"I must be goin' back to the ship now," he said abruptly. "An' thank you, Mary, for the tea." He hurried from the room.

When Larry reached the ground floor he heard Mary's door open again.

"Can I be troublin' you, Mouse, to take something to Dan?" She came down the stairs, carrying a dinner pail. "I'd thought to be eatin' this supper along with him," Mary said, disappointment in her tone. "It's the true word you was sayin', he'll be makin' Dan water-tender?"

Larry forced himself to look into her anxious eyes.

"Sure; it's just as I said, Mary."

"Then I'll pray this night to the Mother of God for that chief; for soon"—Mary hesitated; a light came to her face that lifted the girl high above her squalid surroundings—"the extra pay'll be comin' handy soon," she ended, her voice as soft as a Killarney breeze.

Larry, as he looked at the young wife standing between the scarred columns of the old doorway, was stirred to the farthest corner of his heart.

"They only smile like that to the angels," he thought. Then aloud: "Bad cess to me! I was forgettin' entirely! Dan said to leave this with you." He pushed crumpled, coal-soiled money into her hand, and fled down the steps.

When Larry heard the door close creakily behind him, he looked back to where Mary had stood, his eyes blinking rapidly. After some moments he walked slowly on toward the wharves. In the distance before him the spars and funnels of ships loomed through the dusk, their outlines rapidly fading into the sky beyond—a late September sky, now fast turning to a burned-out sheet of dull gray.

Larry went aboard his ship, and, going to the forecastle, peered into an upper bunk.

"Your baby's not to hem, Mouse," a voice jeered. "I saw him over to Flanagan's awhile ago."

A hopeless look crossed Larry's face.

"Give me a hand up the side, like a good lad, Jim, when I come aboard again."

A few minutes later the little man was making his way back to the steamer, every step of his journey harassed by derisive shouts as he dodged between the lines of belated trucks that jammed West Street from curb to string-piece. He pushed a wheelbarrow before him, his knees bending under the load it held. Across the barrow, legs and head dangling over the sides, lay an unconscious heap that when sober answered to the name of Dan Sullivan.

Larry Walsh, stoker on the coastwise freighter *San Gardo*, was the butt of the ship; every man of the crew imposed on his good nature. He was one of those persons "just fool enough to do what he's told to do." For thirty of his fifty years he had been a seaman, and the marks of a sailor's life were stamped hard on his face. His weathered cheeks were plowed by wrinkles that stretched, deep furrowed, from his red-gray hair to the

corners of his mouth. From under scant brows he peered out on the world with near-sighted eyes; but whenever a smile broadened his wide mouth, his eyes would shine with a kindly light.

Larry's defective sight had led to his banishment as a sailor from the decks. During a storm off Hatteras a stoker had fallen and died on the boiler-room plates.

"It don't take no eyes at all to see clean to the back of a Scotch boiler," the boatswain had told the chief engineer. "I can give you that little squint-eyed feller." So, at the age of forty or thereabouts, Larry left the cool, wind-swept deck to take up work new to him in the superheated, gas-stifling air of the fire-room. Though entered on the ship's papers as a sailor, he had gone without complaint down the straight ladders to the very bottom of the hull. Bidden to take the dead stoker's place, "he was just fool enough to do what he was told to do."

Larry was made the coal-passer of that watch, and began at once the back-breaking task of shoveling fuel from the bunkers to the floor outside, ready for the stokers to heave into the boilers. He had been passing less than an hour during his first watch when the coal ran short in the lower bunker. He speared with a slice-bar in the bunker above. The fuel rested at a steeper angle than his weak eyes could see, and his bar dislodged a wedged lump; an instant later the new passer was half buried under a heap of sliding coal. Bewildered, but unhurt, he crawled to the boiler-room, shaking the coal from his back and shoulders. Through dust-filled ears he heard the general laugh at his plight.

"Look at the nigger Irishman!" a stoker called.

"Irishman!" came the answer. "It's no man at all; it's a mouse you're seein'—a bunker mouse."

From that moment the name Larry Walsh was forgotten.

The *San Gardo* was late getting away that night; two bells of the evening watch had sounded when at last she backed from her pier into the North River and began the first mile of her trip to Galveston. Though she showed a full six inches of the red paint below her water-line, the loading of her freight had

caused the delay. In the hold lay many parts of sawmill machinery. When the last of this clumsy cargo had settled to its allotted place, there was left an unusual void of empty blackness below the deck hatches.

"It's up to you now, Matie," the stevedore had said to the impatient first officer. "My job's done right, but she'll roll her sticks out if it's rough outside."

"That's nice; hand me all the cheerful news you have when you know they hung out storm-warnings at noon," the officer had growled as the stevedore went ashore.

Signs that both the Government and the stevedore had predicted correctly began to show as soon as the vessel cleared the Hook. The wind was blowing half a gale from the southeast and had already kicked up a troublesome sea. The ship, resenting her half-filled hold, pitched with a viciousness new to the crew.

There was unusual activity on board the *San Gardo* that night. Long after the last hatch-cover had been placed, the boatswain continued to inspect, going over the deck from bow to stern to see that every movable thing was lashed fast.

In the engine-room as well, extra precautions were taken. It was Robert Neville's watch below; he was the first of the three assistant engineers. Neville, a young man, was unique in that most undemocratic institution, a ship's crew, for he apparently considered the stokers under him as human beings. For one of his fire-room force he had an actual liking.

"Why do you keep that fellow they call Bunker Mouse in your watch?" the chief once asked.

"Because he's willing and the handiest man I have," Neville answered promptly.

"Well, suit yourself; but that brute Sullivan will kill him some day, I hear."

"I don't know about that, Chief. The Mouse is game."

"So's a trout; but it's got a damn poor show against a shark," the chief had added with a shrug.

Neville's watch went on duty shortly after the twin lights above Sandy Hook had dropped astern. The ship was then

rolling heavily enough to make walking difficult on the oily floor of the engine-room; in the boiler-room, lower by three feet, to stand steady even for a moment was impossible. Here, in this badly lighted quarter of the ship, ill humor hung in the air thicker than the coal-gas.

Dan Sullivan, partly sobered, fired his boiler, showing ugly readiness for a fight. Larry, stoking next to him, kept a weather-eye constantly on his fellow-laborer.

Neville's men had been on duty only a few minutes when the engineer came to the end of the passage and called Larry.

"That's right," Dan growled; "run along, you engineer's pet, leavin' your work for me to do!"

Larry gave him no answer as he hurried away.

"Make fast any loose thing you see here," Neville ordered.

Larry went about the machinery-crowded room securing every object that a lurching ship might send flying from its place. When he returned to the fire-room he heard the water-tender shouting:

"Sullivan, you're loafin' on your job! Get more fire under that boiler!"

"An' ain't I doin' double work, with that damn Mouse forever sneakin' up to the engine-room?"

Larry, giving no sign that he had heard Dan's growling answer, drove his scoop into the coal, and with a swinging thrust spread its heaped load evenly over the glowing bed in the fire-box. He closed the fire-door with a quick slam, for in a pitching boiler-room burning coal can fall from an open furnace as suddenly as new coal can be thrown into it.

"So, you're back," Dan sneered. "It's a wonder you wouldn't stay the watch up there with your betters."

Larry went silently on with his work.

"Soft, ain't it, you jellyfish, havin' me do your job? You eel, you—" Dan poured out a stream of abusive oaths.

Still Larry did not answer.

"Dan's ravin' mad," a man on the port boilers said. "Will he soak the Mouse to-night, I wonder."

"Sure," the stoker beside him answered. "An' it's a dirty shame for a big devil like him to smash the little un."

"You're new on this ship; you don't know 'em. The Mouse is a regular mother to that booze-fighter, an' small thanks he gets. But wait, an' you'll see somethin' in a minute."

Dan's temper, however, was not yet at fighting heat. He glared a moment longer at Larry, then turned sullenly to his boiler. He was none too steady on his legs, and this, with the lurching of the ship, made his work ragged. After a few slipshod passes he struck the door-frame squarely with his scoop, spilling the coal to the floor.

"Damn your squint eyes!" he yelled. "You done that Mouse! You shoved ag'in' me. Now scrape it all up, an' be quick about it!"

Without a word, while his tormentor jeered and cursed him, Larry did as he was told.

"Ain't you got no fight at all in your shriveled-up body?" Dan taunted as Larry finished. "You're a disgrace to Ireland, that's what you are."

Larry, still patient, turned away. Dan sprang to him and spun the little man about.

"Where's the tongue in your ugly mouth?" Dan was shaking with rage. "I'll not be havin' the likes of you followin' me from ship to ship, an' sniffin' at my heels ashore. I won't stand for it no longer, do you hear? Do you think I need a nurse? Now say you'll leave this ship when we makes port, or I'll break every bone in you."

Dan towered above Larry, his arm drawn back ready to strike. Every man in the room stopped work to watch the outcome of the row.

At the beginning of the tirade Larry's thin shoulders had straightened; he raised his head; his lower jaw, undershot, was set hard. The light from the boiler showed his near-sighted eyes steady on Sullivan, unafraid.

"Get on with your work, an' don't be a fool, Dan," he said quietly.

"A fool, am I!"

Dan's knotted fist flashed to within an inch of Larry's jaw. The Bunker Mouse did not flinch. For a moment the big stoker's arm quivered to strike, then slowly fell.

"You ain't worth smashin'," Sullivan snarled, and turned away.

"Well, what d' yer know about that!" the new stoker cried.

"It's that way all the time," he was answered; "there ain't a trip Dan don't bawl the Mouse out to a fare-you-well; but he never lays hand to 'im. None of us knows why."

"You don't? Well, I do. The big slob's yeller, an' I'll show 'im up." The stoker crossed to Sullivan. "See here, Bo, why don't you take on a man your size?" He thrust his face close to Dan's and shouted the answer to his question: "I'll tell you why. You ain't got sand enough."

Dan's teeth snapped closed, then parted to grin at his challenger.

"Do you think you're big enough?" The joy of battle was in his growl.

"Yes, I do." The man put up his hands.

Instantly Dan's left broke down the guard; his right fist landed squarely on the stoker's jaw, sending him reeling to the bunker wall, where he fell. It was a clean knock-out.

"Go douse your friend with a pail of water, Mouse." Dan, still grinning, picked up his shovel and went to work.

When Neville's watch went off duty, Larry found the sea no rougher than on countless other runs he had made along the Atlantic coast. The wind had freshened to a strong gale, but he reached the forecastle with no great difficulty.

Without marked change the *San Gardo* carried the same heavy weather from Barnegat Light to the Virginia capes. Beyond Cape Henry the blow began to stiffen and increased every hour as the freighter plowed steadily southward. Bucking head seas every mile of the way, she picked up Diamond Shoals four hours behind schedule. As she plunged past the tossing lightship, Larry, squinting through a forecastle port, wondered how long its anchor chains would hold. The *San Gardo* was off

Jupiter by noon the third day out, running down the Florida coast; the wind-bent palms showed faintly through the driving spray.

Neville's watch went on duty that night at eight. As his men left the forecastle a driving rain beat against their backs, and seas broke over the port bow at every downward plunge of the ship. To gain the fire-room door, they clung to rail or stanchion to save themselves from being swept overboard. They held on desperately as each wave flooded the deck, watched their chance, then sprang for the next support. On freighters no cargo space is wasted below decks in passageways for the crew.

When Larry reached the fire-room there was not a dry inch of cloth covering his wiry body. He and his fellow-stokers took up immediately the work of the men they had relieved, and during the first hours of their watch fired the boilers with no more difficulty than is usual in heavy weather.

At eleven o'clock the speaking-tube whistled, and a moment later Neville came to the end of the passage.

"What are you carrying?" he shouted to the water-tender. "We've got to keep a full head of steam on her to-night."

"We've got it, Mr. Neville—one hundred and sixty, an' we've held between that and sixty-five ever since I've been on."

"The captain says we've made Tortugas. We lost three hours on the run from Jupiter," Neville answered, and went back to his engine.

During the next hour no one on deck had to tell these men, toiling far below the water-line, that wind and sea had risen. They had warnings enough. Within their steel-incased quarters every bolt and rivet sounded the overstrain forced upon it. In the engine-room the oiler could no longer move from the throttle. Every few minutes now, despite his watchfulness, a jarring shiver spread through the hull as the propeller, thrown high, raced wildly in mid-air before he could shut off steam.

At eleven-thirty the indicator clanged, and its arrow jumped to half-speed ahead. A moment later the men below decks "felt

the rudder" as the *San Gardo*, abandoning further attempts to hold her course, swung about to meet the seas head on.

Eight bells—midnight—struck, marking the end of the shift; but no one came down the ladders to relieve Neville's watch. The growls of the tired men rose above the noise in the fire-room. Again Neville came through the passage.

"The tube to the bridge is out of commission," he called, "but I can raise the chief. He says no man can live on deck; one's gone overboard already. The second watch can't get out of the forecastle. It's up to us, men, to keep this ship afloat, and steam's the only thing that'll do it."

For the next hour and the next the fire-room force and the two men in the engine-room stuck doggedly to their work. They knew that the *San Gardo* was making a desperate struggle, that it was touch and go whether the ship would live out the hurricane or sink to the bottom. They knew also, to the last man of them, that if for a moment the ship fell off broadside to the seas, the giant waves would roll her over and over like an empty barrel in a mill-race. The groaning of every rib and plate in the hull, the crash of seas against the sides, the thunder of waves breaking on deck, drowned the usual noises below.

The color of the men's courage began to show. Some kept grimly at their work, dumb from fear. Others covered fright with profanity, cursing the storm, the ship, their mates, cursing themselves. Larry, as he threw coal steadily through his fire-doors, hummed a broken tune. He gave no heed to Dan, who grew more savage as the slow hours of overtoil dragged by.

About four in the morning Neville called Larry to the engine-room. On his return Dan blazed out at him:

"Boot-lickin' Neville ag'in, was you? I'd lay you out, you shrimp, only I want you to do your work."

Larry took up his shovel; as usual his silence enraged Sullivan.

"You chicken-livered wharf-rat, ain't you got no spunk to answer wid?" Dan jerked a slice-bar from the fire and hurled it to the floor at Larry's feet. The little man leaped in the air; the

white-hot end of the bar, bounding from the floor, missed his legs by an inch.

Larry's jaw shot out; he turned on Sullivan, all meekness gone.

"Dan," he cried shrilly, "if you try that again—"

"Great God! what's that!"

Dan's eyes were staring; panic showed on every face in the room. The sound of an explosion had come from the forward hold. Another followed, and another, a broadside of deafening reports. The terrifying sounds came racing aft. They reached the bulkhead nearest them, and tore through the fire-room, bringing unmasked fear to every man of the watch. The crew stood for a moment awed, then broke, and, rushing for the ladder, fought for a chance to escape this new, unknown madness of the storm.

Only Larry kept his head.

"Stop! Come back!" His shrill voice carried above the terrifying noise. "It's the plates bucklin' between the ribs."

"Plates! Hell! She's breakin' up!"

Neville rushed in from the engine-room.

"Back to your fires, men, or we'll all drown! Steam, keep up—" He was shouting at full-lung power, but his cries were cut short. Again the deafening reports started at the bows. Again, crash after crash, the sounds came tearing aft as if a machine-gun were raking the vessel from bow to stern. At any time these noises would bring terror to men locked below decks; but now, in the half-filled cargo spaces, each crashing report was like the bursting of a ten-inch shell.

Neville went among the watch, urging, commanding, assuring them that these sounds meant no real danger to the ship. He finally ended the panic by beating the more frightened ones back to their boilers.

Then for hours, at every plunge of the ship, the deafening boom of buckling plates continued until the watch was crazed by the sound.

This new terror began between four and five in the morning, when the men had served double time under the grueling strain.

At sunrise another misery was added to their torture; the rain increased suddenly, and fell a steady cataract to the decks. This deluge and the flying spray sent gallons of water down the stack; striking the breeching-plates, it was instantly turned to steam and boiling water. As the fagged stokers bent before the boilers, the hot water, dripping from the breeching, washed scalding channels through the coal-dust down their bare backs. They hailed this new torment with louder curses, but continued to endure it for hours, while outside the hurricane raged, no end, no limit, to its power.

Since the beginning of the watch the bilge-pumps had had all they could do to handle the leakage coming from the seams of the strained hull. Twice Neville had taken the throttle and sent his oiler to clear the suctions. The violent lurching of the ship had churned up every ounce of sediment that had lain undisturbed beneath the floor-plates since the vessel's launching. Sometime between seven and eight all the bilge-pumps clogged at the same moment, and the water began rising at a rate that threatened the fires. It became a question of minutes between life and death for all hands. Neville, working frantically to clear the pumps, yelled to the oiler to leave the throttle and come to him. The water, gaining fast, showed him that their combined efforts were hopeless. He ran to the boiler-room for more aid. Here the water had risen almost to the fires; as the ship rolled, it slushed up between the floor-plates and ran in oily streams about the men's feet. Again panic seized the crew.

"Come on lads!" Sullivan shouted above the infernal din. "We'll be drowned in this hell-hole!"

In the next second he was half-way up the ladder; below him, clinging to the rungs like frightened apes, hung other stokers.

"Come back, you fool!" Neville shouted. "Open that deck-door, and you'll swamp the ship!"

Dan continued to climb.

"Come down or I'll fire!"

"Shoot and be damned to you!" Dan called back.

The report of Neville's revolver was lost in the noise; but

the bullet, purposely sent high, spattered against the steel plate above Dan's head. He looked down. Neville, swaying with the pitching floor, was aiming true for his second shot. Cursing at the top of his voice, Dan scrambled down the ladder, pushing the men below him to the floor.

"Back to your boilers!" Neville ordered; but the stokers, huddled in a frightened group, refused to leave the ladder.

It was only a matter of seconds now before the fires would be drenched. Bilge-water was splashing against the under boiler-plates, filling the room with dense steam. Neville left the men and raced for the engine-room. He found Larry and the oiler working desperately at the valve-wheel, and gave the best he had to open the valve. This manifold, connecting the pump with the bilges, was intended only for emergency use. It had not been opened for months, and was now rusted tight. The three men, straining every muscle, failed to budge the wheel. After the third hopeless attempt, Larry let go, and without a word bolted through the passage to the fire-room.

"You miserable quitter!" Neville screamed after him, and bent again to the wheel.

As he looked up, despairing of any chance to loosen the rusted valve, Larry came back on the run, carrying a coal-pick handle. He thrust it between the spokes of the wheel.

"Now, Mr. Neville, all together!" His Celtic jaw was set hard.

All three threw weight against the handle. The wheel stirred.

As they straightened for another effort, a louder noise of hissing steam sounded from the boilers, and the fire-room force, mad with fright, came crowding through the passage to the higher floor of the engine-room.

"Quick! Together!" Neville gasped.

The wheel moved an inch.

"Once more! *Now!*"

The wheel turned and did not stop. The three men dropped the lever, seized the wheel, and threw the valve wide open.

"Good work, men!" Neville cried, and fell back exhausted.

The centrifugal pump was thrown in at the last desperate moment. When the rusted valve finally opened, water had risen to the lower grate-bars under every boiler in the fire-room. But once in action, the twelve-inch suction of the giant pump did its work with magic swiftness. In less than thirty seconds the last gallon of water in the bilges had been lifted and sent, rushing through the discharge, overboard.

Neville faced the boiler-room crew sternly.

"Now, you cowards, get to your fires!" he said.

As the men slunk back through the passage Dan growled: "May that man some day burn in hell!"

"Don't be wishin' him no such luck," an angry voice answered; "wish him down here wid us."

The morning dragged past; noon came, marking the sixteenth hour that the men, imprisoned below the seaswept decks, had struggled to save the ship. Sundown followed, and the second night of their unbroken toil began. They stuck to it, stood up somehow under the racking grind, their nerves quivering, their bodies craving food, their eyes gritty from the urge of sleep, while always the hideous noises of the gale screamed in their ears. The machine-gun roar of buckling plates, raking the battered hull, never ceased.

With each crawling minute the men grew more silent, more desperate. Dan Sullivan let no chance pass to vent his spleen on Larry. Twice during the day his fellow-stokers, watching the familiar scene, saw the big man reach the point of crushing the small one; but the ever-expected blow did not fall.

Shortly after midnight the first hope came to the exhausted men that their fight might not be in vain. Though the buckling plates still thundered, though the floor under their feet still pitched at crazy angles, there was a "feel" in the fire-room that ribs and beams and rivets were not so near the breaking-point.

Neville came to the end of the passage.

"The hurricane's blowing itself to death," he shouted. "Stick to it, boys, for an hour longer; the second watch can reach us by then."

The hour passed, but no relief came. The wind had lost some force, but the seas still broke over the bows, pouring tons of water to the deck. The vessel pitched as high, rolled as deep, as before.

As the men fired their boilers they rested the filled scoops on the floor and waited for the ship to roll down. Then a quick jerk of the fire-door chain, a quick heave of the shovel, and the door was snapped shut before the floor rolled up again. Making one of these hurried passes, Larry swayed on tired legs. He managed the toss and was able to close the door before he fell hard against Dan. His sullen enemy instantly launched a new tirade, fiercer, more blasphemous, than any before. He ended a stream of oaths, and rested the scoop ready for his throw.

"I'll learn yuh, yuh snivelin'—" The ship rolled deep. Dan jerked the fire-door open—" yuh snivelin' shrimp!" He glared at Larry as he made the pass. He missed the opening. His shovel struck hard against the boiler front. The jar knocked Dan to the floor, pitched that moment at its steepest angle. He clutched desperately to gain a hold on the smooth-worn steel plates, his face distorted by fear as he slid down to the fire.

Larry, crying a shrill warning, sprang between Sullivan and the open furnace. He stooped, and with all the strength he could gather shoved the big stoker from danger. Then above the crashing sounds a shriek tore the steam-clouded air of the fire-room. Larry had fallen!

As his feet struck the ash-door, the ship rolled up. A cascade falling from Dan's fire had buried Larry's legs to the knees under a bed of white-hot coals. He shrieked again the cry of the mortally hurt as Dan dragged him too late from before the open door.

"Mouse! Mouse!" Horror throbbed in Sullivan's voice. "You're hurted bad!" He knelt, holding Larry in his arms, while others threw water on the blazing coals.

"Speak, lad!" Dan pleaded. "Speak to me!"

The fire-room force stood over them silenced. Accident,

death even, they always expected; but to see Dan Sullivan show pity for any living thing, and above all, for the Bunker Mouse—

The lines of Larry's tortured face eased.

"It's the last hurt I'll be havin', Dan," he said before he fainted.

"Don't speak the word, Mouse, an' you just after savin' me life!" Then the men in the fire-room saw a miracle; tears filled the big stoker's eyes.

Neville had heard Larry's cry and rushed to the boiler-room.

"For God's sake! what's happened now?"

Dan pointed a shaking finger. Neville looked once at what only a moment before had been the legs and feet of a man. As he turned quickly from the sight the engineer's face was like chalk.

"Here, two of you," he called unsteadily, "carry him to the engine-room."

Dan threw the men roughly aside.

"Leave him be," he growled. "Don't a one of you put hand on him!" He lifted Larry gently and, careful of each step, crossed the swaying floor.

"Lay him there by the dynamo," Neville ordered when they had reached the engine-room.

Dan hesitated.

"'T ain't fittin', sir, an' him so bad hurt. Let me be takin' him to the store-room."

Neville looked doubtfully up the narrow stairs.

"We can't get him there with this sea running."

Sullivan spread his legs wide, took both of Larry's wrists in one hand, and swung the unconscious man across his back. He strode to the iron stairs and began to climb. As he reached the first grating Larry groaned. Dan stopped dead; near him the great crossheads were plunging steadily up and down.

"God, Mr. Neville, did he hit ag'in' somethin'?"

The sweat of strain and fear covered his face.

The vessel leaped to the crest of a wave, and dropped sheer into the trough beyond.

"No; but for God's sake, man, go on! You'll pitch with him to the floor if she does that again!"

Dan, clinging to the rail with his free hand, began climbing the second flight.

At the top grating Neville sprang past him to the store-room door.

"Hold him a second longer," he called, and spread an armful of cotton waste on the vise bench.

Dan laid Larry on the bench. He straightened his own great body for a moment, then sat down on the floor and cried.

Neville, pretending not to see Dan's distress, brought more waste. As he placed it beneath his head Larry groaned. Dan, still on the floor, wrung his hands, calling on the saints and the Virgin to lighten the pain of this man it had been his joy to torture.

Neville turned to him.

"Get up from there!" he cried sharply. "Go see what you can find to help him."

Dan left the room, rubbing his red-flanneled arm across his eyes. He returned quickly with a can of cylinder oil, and poured it slowly over the horribly burned limbs.

"There ain't no bandages, sir; only this." He held out a shirt belonging to the engineer; his eyes pleaded his question. Neville nodded, and Dan tore the shirt in strips. When he finished the task, strange to his clumsy hands, Larry had regained consciousness and lay trying pitifully to stifle his moans.

"Does it make you feel aisier, Mouse?" Dan leaned close to the quivering lips to catch the answer.

"It helps fine," Larry answered, and fainted again.

"You'll be leavin' me stay wid him, sir?" Dan begged. "'T was for me he's come to this."

Neville gave consent and left the two men together.

Between four and five in the morning, when Neville's watch had lived through thirty-three unbroken hours of the fearful grind, a shout that ended in a screaming laugh ran through the fire-room. High above the toil-crazed men a door had opened and

closed. A form, seen dimly through the smoke and steam, was moving backward down the ladder. Again the door opened; another man came through. Every shovel in the room fell to the steel floor; every man in the room shouted or laughed or cried.

The engine-room door, too, had opened, admitting the chief and his assistant. Not until he had examined each mechanical tragedy below did the chief give time to the human one above.

"Where's that man that's hurt?" he asked as he came slowly from an inspection of the burned-out bearings down the shaft alley.

Neville went with him to the store-room. Dan, sagging under fatigue, clung to the bench where Larry lay moaning.

"You can go now, Sullivan," Neville told him.

Dan raised his head, remorse, entreaty, stubbornness in his look.

"Let me be! I'll not leave him!"

The chief turned to Neville.

"What's come over that drunk?" he asked.

"Ever since the Mouse got hurt, Sullivan's acted queer, just like a woman."

"Get to your quarters, Sullivan," the chief ordered. "We'll take care of this man."

Dan's hands closed; for an instant he glared rebellion from blood-shot eyes. Then the iron law of sea discipline conquering, he turned to Larry.

"The Blessed Virgin aise you, poor Mouse!" he mumbled huskily and slouched out through the door.

At midday the *San Gardo's* captain got a shot at the sun. Though his vessel had been headed steadily north-east for more than thirty hours, the observation showed that she had made twenty-eight miles sternway to the southwest. By two in the afternoon the wind had dropped to half a gale, making a change of course possible. The captain signaled full speed ahead, and the ship, swinging about, began limping across the gulf, headed once more toward Galveston.

Neville, who had slept like a stone, came on deck just before

sunset. The piled-up seas, racing along the side, had lost their breaking crests; the ship rose and fell with some degree of regularity. He called the boatswain and went to the store-room.

They found Larry in one of his conscious moments.

"Well, Mouse, we're going to fix you in a better place," the engineer called with what heart he could show.

"Thank you kindly, sir," Larry managed to answer; "but 't is my last voyage, Mr. Neville." And the grit that lay hidden in the man's soul showed in his pain-twisted smile.

They carried him up the last flight of iron stairs to the deck. Clear of the engine-room, the boatswain turned toward the bow.

"No. The other way, Boson," Neville ordered.

The chief, passing them, stopped.

"Where are you taking him, Mr. Neville?"

"The poor fellow's dying, sir," Neville answered in a low voice.

"Well, where are you taking him?" the chief persisted.

"I'd like to put him in my room, sir."

"A stoker in officers' quarters!" The chief frowned. "Sunday-School discipline!" He disappeared through the engine-room door, slamming it after him.

They did what they could, these seamen, for the injured man; on freighters one of the crew has no business to get hurt. They laid Larry in Neville's berth and went out, leaving a sailor to watch over him.

The sun rose the next day in a cloudless sky, and shone on a brilliant sea of tumbling, white-capped waves. Far off the starboard bow floated a thin line of smoke from a tug's funnel, the first sign to the crew since the hurricane that the world was not swept clean of ships. Two hours later the tug was standing by, her captain hailing the *San Gardo* through a megaphone.

"Run in to New Orleans!" he shouted.

"I cleared for Galveston, and I'm going there," the *San Gardo's* captain called back.

"No, you ain't neither."

"I'd like to know why I won't."

"Because you can't"—the answer carried distinctly across the waves—"there ain't no such place. It's been washed clean off the earth."

The *San Gardo* swung farther to the west and with her engine pounding at every stroke, limped on toward the Mississippi.

At five o'clock a Port Eads pilot climbed over the side, and taking the vessel through South Pass, straightened her in the smooth, yellow waters of the great river for the hundred-mile run to New Orleans.

When the sun hung low over the sugar plantations that stretch in flat miles to the east and west beyond the levees, when all was quiet on land and water and ship, Neville walked slowly to the forecastle.

"Sullivan," he called, "come with me."

Dan climbed down from his bunk and came to the door; the big stoker searched Neville's face with a changed, sobered look.

"I've been wantin' all this time to go to 'im. How's he now, sir?"

"He's dying, Sullivan, and has asked for you."

Outside Neville's quarters Dan took off his cap and went quietly into the room.

Larry lay with closed eyes, his face ominously white.

Dan crept clumsily to the berth and put his big hand on Larry's shoulder.

"It's me, Mouse. They wouldn't leave me come no sooner."

Larry's head moved slightly; his faded eyes opened.

Dan stooped in awkward embarrassment until his face was close to Larry.

"I come to ask you—" Dan stopped. The muscles of his thick neck moved jerkily—"to ask you, Mouse, before—to forgit the damn mean things—I done to you, Mouse."

Larry made no answer; he kept his failing sight fixed on Dan.

After a long wait Sullivan spoke again.

"An' to think you done it, Mouse, for me!"

A light sprang to Larry's eyes, flooding his near-sighted gaze with sudden anger.

"For you!" The cry came from his narrow chest with jarring force. "You! You!" he repeated in rising voice. "It's always of yourself you're thinkin', Dan Sullivan!" He stopped, his face twitching in pain; then with both hands clenched he went on, his breast heaving at each word hurled at Dan:

"Do you think I followed you from ship to ship, dragged you out of every rum-hole in every port, for your own sake!"

He lay back exhausted, his chest rising and falling painfully, his eyelids fluttering over his burning eyes.

Dan stepped back, and, silenced, stared at the dying man.

Larry clung to his last moments of life, fighting for strength to finish. He struggled, and raised himself on one elbow.

"For you!" he screamed. "No, for Mary! For Mary, my own flesh and blood—Mary, the child of the woman I beat when I was drunk an' left to starve when I got ready!"

Through the stateroom door the sun's flat rays struck full on Larry's inspired face. He swayed on his elbow; his head fell forward. By a final effort he steadied himself. His last words came in ringing command.

"Go back! Go—" he faltered, gasping for breath—" go home sober to Mary an' the child that's comin'!"

The fire of anger drifted slowly from Larry's dying gaze. The little man fell back. The Bunker Mouse went out, all man, big at the end.

IRVIN S. COBB

Newspaper man, humorist, dramatist, short-story writer

In spite of his protestation of constant failures to turn out copy which satisfies him, Mr. Cobb has written and continues to write admirable "copy." By some critics he is considered the greatest humorist of America since Mark Twain and a greater short-story writer of local color than Bret Harte. Mr. E. V. Lucas says of his humor: "Beneath Mr. Cobb's fun is a mass of ripe experience and sagacity. However playful he may be on the surface, one is aware of an almost Johnsonian universality beneath. It would not be too extravagant to call his humor the bloom on the fruit of the tree of knowledge." But his humorous writings do not tell all of it. As Mr. Davis of *Munsey's Magazine* has aptly put it: "He writes in octaves, striking instinctively all the chords of humor, tragedy, pathos and romance with either hand." If the student wishes to read some tales of horror written by an artist, he may turn to Mr. Cobb's "Fishhead," "The Belled Buzzard," or "An Occurrence up a Side Street."

The article to which Mr. Cobb refers illustrates Mr. Cobb's ability to write features for the magazines—this time a "human interest" story. But "The Great Auk" has been chosen here to illustrate his art as a short-story writer.

Mr. Cobb says of himself:

"I do not feel qualified to give others advice as to how to write good English. That is a job I constantly am striving to learn. Practice, hard work, reading the writings of real master-writers—that's my system. In the face of my own constant failures to turn out copy which satisfies

me, it still is the best system I know anything about—the sole one, in fact.

". . . I should say that the March (1926) issue of *Hearst's International and Cosmopolitan* carries an article which I regard as being about as good as I have done in recent years."

—Irvin Cobb.

THE GREAT AUK [1]

As regards the body of the house it lay mostly in shadows—the man-made, daytime shadows which somehow always seem denser and blacker than those that come in the night. The little jogs in the wall behind the boxes were just the same as coalholes. The pitched front of the balcony suggested a deformed upper jaw, biting down on darkness. Its stucco facings, shining dimly, like a row of teeth, added to the illusion. At the bottom of the pit, or the family circle, or whatever it was they called it at the Cosmos Theater, where the light was somewhat better, the backs of the seats showed bumpily beneath the white cloths that covered them, like lines of graves in a pauper burying ground after a snowstorm.

A third of the way back, in this potter's field of dead-and-gone laughter, a man was hunched in a despondent posture. His attitude would make you think of a lone ghost that had answered the resurrection trump too soon and now was overcome with embarrassment at having been deceived by a false alarm. The brim of his hat rested on the bridge of his nose. Belonging, as he did, to a race that is esteemed to be essentially commercial, he had the artistic face and the imaginative eyes which, as often as not, are found in those of his breed.

His name was Sam Verba. He was general director for Cohalan & Hymen, producing managers. He was watching a rehearsal of a new play, though he did not appear to be. Seemingly, if he was interested at all it was in the movements of two elderly chore-women, who dawdled about the place deliberately, with dust rags and brooms. Occasionally, as one of the women raised her voice shrilly to address her distant sister, he went

[1] From *Local Color*. Copyright 1916 by Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc.

"Sh-h! Sh-h!"—like a defective steam pipe. Following this the offender would lower her voice for a space measurable by seconds.

Border lights, burning within the proscenium arch, made the stage brightly visible, revealing it as a thing homely and nude. Stage properties were piled indiscriminately at either side. Against the bare brick wall at the back, segments of scenes were stacked any-which-way, so that a strip of a drawing-room set was superimposed on a strip of a kitchen and that in turn overlapped part of a wainscoted library, the result being as though an earthquake had come along and shaken one room of somebody's house into another room and that into another, and then had left them so. In sight were four women and nine men, who perched on chairs or tables or roosted, crow-fashion, upon the iron steps of a narrow staircase which ascended to the top tier of dressing rooms, extending along a narrow balcony above. The hour was eleven o'clock in the morning. Therefore these persons wore the injured look which people of their nocturnal profession customarily wear upon being summoned out of their beds before midday.

At a little table, teetering on rickety legs almost in the trough of the footlights, sat a man hostilely considering a typewritten script, which was so interlined, so marked and disfigured with crosses, stars, and erasures that only one person—the author of these ciphers—might read his own code and sometimes even he couldn't. The man at the table was the director, especially engaged to put on this particular piece, which was a comedy drama. He raised his head.

"All right, children," he said, "take the second act—from the beginning, Miss Cherry, Mrs. Morehead—come along. Stand by, everybody else, and, please, in Heaven's name, remember your cues—for once."

A young woman and a middle-aged woman detached themselves from one of the waiting groups and came downstage. The young woman moved eagerly to obey; she was an exceedingly pretty young woman. The other woman, having passed her

youth, strove now to re-create it in her costume. She wore a floppy hat and a rather skimpy frock, which buttoned down her back, school-girl fashion, and ended several inches above her ankles. Under the light her dyed hair shone with the brilliancy of a new copper saucepan. There were fine, puckery lines at her eyes. Her skin, though, had the smooth texture which comes, some say, from the grease paint, and others say from plenty of sleep.

She held in one hand a flimsy, blue-backed sheaf; it was her part in the play. Having that wisdom in her calling which comes of long experience, she would read from it until automatically she had acquired it without prolonged mental effort; would let her trained and docile memory sop up the speeches by processes of absorption. Miss Cherry carried no manuscript; she didn't need it. She had been sitting up nights, studying her lines. For she, the poor thing, was newly escaped from a dramatic school. Mrs. Morehead wanted to make a living. Miss Cherry wanted to make a hit.

These two began the opening scene of the act and, between them, carried it forward. Miss Cherry as the daughter was playing it in rehearsal, exactly as she expected to play it before an audience, inflections, short catches of the breath, emotional gasps—all the illusions, all the business of the part. On the other hand, Mrs. Morehead appeared to have but one ambition in her present employment and that was to get it over with as speedily as possible. After this contrasted fashion, then, they progressed to a certain dramatic juncture:

"But, mother," said Miss Cherry, her arms extended in a carefully-thought-out attitude of girlish bewilderment, "what am I to do?"

Mrs. Morehead glanced down, refreshing her memory by a glance into the blue booklet.

"My child," she said, "leave it to destiny."

She said this in the tone of a person of rather indifferent appetite, ordering toast and tea for breakfast.

A pause ensued here.

"My child," repeated Mrs. Morehead, glancing over her

shoulder impatiently, but speaking still in the same voice, "leave it to destiny."

"Well, well—" snapped the man at the little table, "that's the cue, 'leave it to destiny!' Come on, McVey? Come a-w-n, McVey? Where's McVey?" He raised his voice fretfully.

A nervous thin man hurried down the stage.

"Oh, there you are. Go ahead, McVey. You're keeping everybody waiting. Didn't I tell you you'd have to read the grandfather's part to-day?"

"No, sir, you didn't," said McVey, aggrieved.

"Well, anyhow, I meant to," said his superior.

"But I'm reading Miss Gifford's part this morning," said McVey, who was the assistant stage manager. "She had to go to see about her costumes."

"You'll have to read 'em both, then," ordered the special director. "Anyhow, the parts don't conflict—they're not on the stage together during this act. Do the best you can. Now let's go back and take those last two sides over again."

Vibrantly and with the proper gesture in the proper place, Miss Cherry repeated her speech. Wearily and without gestures, Mrs. Morehead repeated hers. The flustered McVey holding the absentee Miss Gifford's part in one hand and the mythical grandfather's in the other, circled upstage and, coming hurriedly down, stepped in between them.

"No, no, no," barked the director, "don't come on that way—you'll throw both these ladies out. Come on at the upper side of that blue chair, Mac; that's the door. This is supposed to be a house. You can't walk right through the side of a house without upsetting things. You realize that, don't you? Once more—back again to 'leave it to destiny.' "

The rehearsal went on by the customary process of advancing a foot and a half, then retreating a foot, then re-advancing two feet. The novices in the cast were prodigal of their energy, but the veterans saved themselves against what they knew was coming later, when they would need all they had of strength and more, besides.

A young man let himself in through the box-office door and stood in that drafty, inky-black space which theatrical folks call the front of the house and the public call the back of the house. Coming out of the sunlight into this cave of the winds, he was blinded at first. He blinked until he peered out the shape of Verba, slumped down midway of a sheeted stretch of orchestra chairs, and he felt his way down the center aisle and slipped into a place alongside the silent, broody figure. The newcomer was the author of the play, named Offutt; his age was less than thirty; and his manner was cheerful, as befitting an author who is less than thirty and has placed a play with an established firm.

"Well," he said, "how's everything going?"

"Rotten, thank you!" said Verba, continuing to stare straight ahead. "We're still shy one grandfather, if that should be of any interest to you."

"But you had Grainger engaged—I thought that was all settled last night," said the playwright.

"That tired business man? Huh!" said Verba expressively. "By the time he'd got through fussing over the style of contract he wanted, in case he liked the part and we liked him in it, and then quarreling about the salary he was to get, and then arguing out how high up the list his name was to appear in the billing, your friend Grainger was completely exhausted.

"And then, on top of that, he discovered we were going to Chicago after the opening in Rochester, and he balked. Said his following was here in New York. Said he'd supposed we were coming right in here after the opening instead of fussing round on the road. Said he couldn't think of being kept out of New York at the beginning of the season unless he got at least seventy-five more a week. Said he'd go back to vaudeville first. Said he had a swell offer from the two-a-day shops anyhow.

"Then I said a few things to Grainger and he walked out on me. His following!—do you get that? Grainger could carry all the following he's got in the top of his hat and still have plenty of room left for his head. So there you are, my son—within ten

days of the tryout and nobody on hand to play dear old grandfather for you! And nobody in sight either—in case anybody should happen to ask you."

"Oh, we'll find somebody," said Offutt optimistically. The young of the playwrighting species are constitutionally optimistic.

"Oh, we will, will we? Well, for example, who?— since you're so confident about it?"

"That's up to you," countered Offutt, "I should worry!"

"Take it from me, young man, you'd better worry," growled Verba morosely.

"But, Verba," contended young Offutt, "there must be somebody loose who'll fit the part. What with thousands of actors looking for engagements—"

"Say, Offutt, what's the use of going over that again?" broke in Verba in a tone which indicated he was prepared to go over it again. "To begin with, there aren't thousands of actors looking for jobs. There are a few actors looking for jobs—and a few thousand others looking for jobs who only think they can act. Off hand, I can list you just three men fit to play this grandfather part—or four, if you stick in Grainger as an added starter."

He held up a long, slender hand, ticking off the names on his fingers.

"There's Warburton, and there's Pell, and there's old Gabe Clayton. Warburton's tied up in the pictures. Damn the movies! They're stealing everybody worth a hang. I got a swell offer myself yesterday from the Ziegler crowd to direct features for 'em. The letter's on my desk now. Old Gabe is in a sanitarium taking the rest cure—which means for the time being he's practically sober, but not available for us or anybody else. And Guy Pell's under contract to Fructer Brothers, and you know what a swell chance there is of their loaning him to our shop.

"That doesn't leave anybody but Grainger, who's so swelled up with conceit that he's impossible. And, anyhow he's too young. Just as I told you yesterday, I only figured him in as a

last chance. I don't want a young fellow playing this part—with his face all messed up with false whiskers and an artificial squeak in his voice. I want an old man—one that looks old and talks old and can play old.

"He's got to be right or nothing's right. You may have written this piece, boy; but, by gum, I'm responsible for the way it's cast, and I want a regular, honest-to-God grandfather. Only," he added, quoting the tag of a current Broadway story, "only there ain't no such animal."

"I still insist, Verba," put in Offutt, "that you overestimate the importance of the grandfather—he's only a character bit."

"Son," said Verba, "you talk like an author. Maybe you thought he was a bit when you wrote him in; but he's not. He's going to carry this play. He's the axle that the whole action turns on and if he's wrong the whole thing's wrong. If he falls down your play falls down."

"Well, suppose he is," said Offutt plaintively. The bruised worm was beginning to turn. "Am I to blame because I write a part so human and so lifelike that nobody's competent to do it?"

Verba gave him a sidelong glance and grinned sardonically. "Don't ask me whose fault it is," he said. "I know this: In the old days actors were actors." Verba, who was perhaps forty-four, spoke with the air of having known Edmund Kean intimately. "They bred real actors then—people who had versatility and a range. You got hold of a play and you went out and hired a bunch of troupers, and they played it for you. Now we don't have actors any more—we only have types.

"Everybody's a type. A man or a woman starts out being one kind of type, and sticks right there. Dramatists write parts for types, and managers go out and hire types for the parts. Sometimes they can't find the right type and then there's another expensive production taking a trip to its eternal rest in the storehouse. I don't know whose fault it is—I only know it's not mine. It's hell—that's what it is—simply hell!"

Gloom choked Verba. He stared moodily ahead of him, where the broad of a wide, blue-ginghamed back showed above the

draped tops of the next row of seats but one. Suddenly he smote his hands together.

"Bateman!" he exclaimed. "Old Bird Bateman!"

Up from behind the next row of seats but one rose a chore-lady with her nose in the air and her clenched fists on the places where her hips should have been—if she had any hips.

"I beg your par-r-don?" she inquired, quivering with a grand, indignant politeness; "was you referrin' to me as an ould boid?"

"Madam," said Verba, "resume your pleasures. I wasn't thinking of you."

"Thin why was you lookin' at me whin you said it? You may be the owner of this bum dump, f'r all I care, but job or no job, let me tell you this, young man—there's no black Prowtestant Jew alive kin call me out of me own name an'——"

"Oh, shut up," said Verba, without heat. He got on his feet. "Come on, Offutt, the lady thinks I'm trying to flirt with her and between the three of us, we're breaking up rehearsals. Let's get out—I've got an idea." In the half light his eyes shone like a cat's.

Outside on the hot pavement, he took Offutt by the lapels of his coat. "Boy," he said, "did you ever hear of Burton Bateman—better known as Old Bird Bateman?"

Offutt shook his head.

"Never did," he confessed.

"You're too young at this game to remember, I guess," said Verba. "Well, then, did you ever hear of the Scudder Stock Company?"

"Of course I've heard of that," said Offutt. "It was long before my time, though."

"It was long before everybody's time," assented Verba. "Ten years is the same as a century on this street. But twenty-five years ago Burt Bateman played leads with the Scudder Stock Company—yes; and played juveniles and walking gentlemen and friends of the family and long-lost heirs and Dutchmen and Irishmen and niggers—played anything there was to play.

"He wasn't one of your single-barrelled modern types and

none of your old-time ranting scenery-biters either; he was an actor. If he'd come along a little later they'd have made a star out of him and probably ruined him. You'd have remembered him then. But he never was a star. He never was featured even. He just kept right on being an actor. And gee, how he could eat up an old man's part!"

"You speak of him as though he were dead," said Offutt.

"He might as well be—he's forgotten," said Verba, unconsciously coining all Broadway's epitaph for all Broadway's tribe. "I haven't seen him for fifteen years, but I understand he's still alive—that is, he hasn't quit breathing. Somebody was telling me not long ago they'd crossed his trail 'way downtown.

"You see, Burt Bateman was a character in his way, just as old Nate Scudder was one in his way. I guess that's why they hung together so long. When the theatrical district started to move uptown Nate wouldn't move with it. It moved from Fourteenth Street to Twenty-third, and from there to Thirty-fourth, and from there to Forty-second—and it's still headed north. But Scudder stayed where he was. And it broke him—broke his heart, too, I guess. Anyhow, he died and his organization scattered—all but Bateman. He wouldn't scatter. The heirs fell out and the estate—what was left of it—got tied up in litigation; and it's been tied up ever since."

He turned and waved a long arm at a passing taxi. The driver curved his machine up to the curb.

"Come on!" said Verba, making to cross the sidewalk.

"Come on where?" asked Offutt.

"We're going to University Place—you and me," said Verba, quickened and alive all over with his inspiration. "We're going down to Scudder's Theater. Didn't know there was such a theater as Scudder's, did you? Well, there is—what's left of it. We're going down there to find Old Bird Bateman. That's where he was, last accounts. And if the booze hasn't got him he's going to play that damn grandfather in this show of yours."

"Can he do it?"

Verba halted with one foot in the taxi.

"Can he do it? Watch him, boy—that's all! Just watch him. Say, it's a notion—digging that old boy out of the graveyard.

"You never heard of him and I'd forgotten him; but you take a lot of these old-timers who don't think there've been any actors since Fanny Davenport and Billy Florence—they'll remember him. And you bet they'll come to see him. We'll give this town a sensation—and that's what it loves, this town—sensation."

Once upon a time—that was when he was a green reporter newly come to town—Offutt had known, more or less minutely, almost every prowlable inch of the tip of the long seamy tongue of rock that is called Manhattan Island. Now, as a story-writer and a playwriter, he only went down there when he sought for local colour in Greenwich Village, or around Washington Square or on the lower East Side. As for Verba, he found his local colour, ready-mixed, in scene-painters' pots and make-up boxes. Being a typical New Yorker—if there is such a thing—he was as insular, as provincial, as closely bound to his own briefened ranging ground as none but a typical New Yorker can be. To him this wasn't a metropolis of five boroughs, many bridges and five-and-a-half millions. To him this was a strip of street, something less than two miles long, with shorter stretches of street meeting it at right angles, east and west, as ribs meet a spine. His map of New York would have resembled a codfish's skeleton, its head aiming toward far-away Harlem, the fork in its tail pointing to the distant Battery. To him therefore Twenty-third Street was Farthest South. What might lie below was in the Antarctic Circle of community life.

They crossed Twenty-third Street and invaded a district grown strange to his eyes—a district where tall loft buildings, the successors to the sweatshops of an earlier, but not very much earlier, day, mounted, floor by floor, above the humbler roofs of older houses. They crossed Fourteenth, the taxi weaving a way through dense masses of men who gabbled in strange tongues among themselves, for lunch-time had come and the garment-workers, the feather-workers and the fur-workers,

deserting their work benches for an hour, had flocked into the open, packing the sidewalks and overflowing upon the asphalt, to chatter and gossip and take the air. Just below Fourteenth Street they swung eastward and turned into University Place, which is a street of past memories and present acute activities, and, in a minute, obeying Verba's instructions, their driver brought them to a standstill before a certain number.

"Give it the once-over," advised Verba as he climbed out and felt in his pocket for the fare. "You can figure for yourself how far out of the world it is—nobody's had the nerve to try to open it up as a moving-picture palace. And that's the tip-off on any shack in this burg that'll hold a crowd, a screen and a projecting machine all at the same time."

Offutt looked and marvelled that he had never noticed this place before since surely, covering assignments or on exploration jaunts, he must have passed it by a score of times. It stood midway of the block. On one side of it was a little pawnshop, its single grimy window filled with the strange objects which persons acquire, seemingly for pawning purposes exclusively—sword-canes and mandolins with mother-of-pearl insets in them, and moss-agate cuff buttons. On the other side was a trunk store with half of its wares cluttering the narrow-door passage and signs everywhere displayed to inform the public that the proprietor was going out of business and must sell his stock at an enormous sacrifice, wherefore until further notice, perfectly ruinous prices would prevail. It appears to be a characteristic of all trunk stores that their proprietors are constantly going out of business and that their contents, invariably, are to be had below cost.

Between these two establishments gaped a recessed and cavernous entryway flanked by two big stone pillars of a dropsical contour and spanned over at the top by a top-heavy cornice ponderously and painfully Corinthian in aspect. The outjutting eaves rested flat on the coping stones and from there the roof gabled up sharply. Old gates, heavily chained and slanting inward, warded the opening between the pair of pillars, so that

the mouth of the place was muzzled with iron, like an Elizabethan shrew's.

Above, the building was beetle-browed; below, it was dish-faced. A student of architectural criminology would pause before this façade and take notes.

The space inclosed within the skewed and bent gate pickets was a snug harbor for the dust of many a gritty day. There were little grey drifts of it at the foot of each of the five steps that led up to the flagged floor level; secretions of grime covered the barred double doors on beyond the steps, until the original color was only to be guessed at; scraps of dodgers, pieces of newspaper and tattered handbills adhered to every carved projection at the feet of the columns, like dead leaves about tree boles in the woods.

On the frieze overhead might be made out, in lettering that once had been gold-leafed, the line: Scudder's Family Theatre. The words were scarcely decipherable now. Bill-posters had coated every available inch of space with snipes and sheets.

Verba shook the gates until the hasps gritted and the chains clanged.

"Nobody at home," he said. "I guess the sheriff locked her up when the lawsuits started and then threw away the key. Well, let's scout round. Somebody's sure to know our man; they told me Bateman was a neighborhood character down here. A cop ought to be able to help us—only I don't see one. Maybe they don't have cops in this street."

Speculatively his eyes ranged the vista up and down the block and opposite. He pointed to a saloon diagonally across the way, next door to the first corner south.

"When in doubt," he said, "ask everybody's friend. Come on; we'll go over and brace the barkeep."

A young man, with a humorous slant to his eyebrows and dark hair combed back from the forehead in neatly ornate scallops, pulled down the front of a reasonably clean white jacket and spread both hands on the bar, awaiting their pleasure.

"Mister Wine Clerk," said Verba, using the ceremonial title of his Tenderloin range, "we're trying to find an old boy named Bateman—Burton Bateman, retired actor by profession. Ever hear of him?"

"Sure!" assented the barkeeper. "He's part of the fixtures —Old Bird is; but he ain't about now. To ketch him, you've come an hour late."

"Lives round here somewhere, doesn't he?"

"Search me," said the young man succinctly. "I guess he don't exactly live anywhere—not in a regular lodging house or anything like that. See? I never asked him—him being sort of touchy about his private affairs—but I guess he sleeps in some hole somewhere. He mostly does his scoffin' here though—as a guest of the house."

"Does his what here?" asked Verba.

"His scoffin'—his feedin'. See?" The young man flirted a thumb in the direction of the free-lunch counter.

"Oh! He eats here?"

"You said it! The boss—man that owns this liquor store—is a kind of an old-timer round here himself. I've heard him say he knowed The Bird away back yonder when the old theatre 'crost the street was runnin' and things was breakin' better for the old boy than what they do now. So he stakes him to a drink every now and then—Old Bird won't take a piece of change, but he will take a drink—and he lets him browse off the free lunch all he's a mind to.

"He comes driftin' in here twicet a day regular and fills up on chow for nothin'! But he's been here already and left to-day —'bout an hour ago. I figure he won't be back now till 'long about four or five o'clock."

Verba became cognisant of a tugging at his coat. An incredibly small, incredibly ragged boy, with some draggled first editions under his arm, had wormed silently in between his legs and was looking up at him with one eye. The boy had only one eye to look with. The other eye was a flattened slit over a sunken socket.

"Mister! Say, Mister!" beseeched the gamin earnestly. "Gimme fi' cent and I'll—"

"Hey you, Blinky!" interposed the barkeeper, bending over the bar to see the small intruder. "Beat it!"

There was a scurrying thud of bare feet on the tiled floor and the wizened intruder magically had vanished between the swinging doors.

"You gents can sit down and wait if you want to," said the barkeeper. "It's liable to be a long time though. Or I can tell Old Bird, when he comes in, somebody's askin' for him and try to hold him for you. I could 'phone you even, if it's important, if you'll gimme your number."

"It is important—in a way," said Verba. "Suppose we do that, Offutt—give the wine clerk our telephone number."

He laid a coin and a card on the bar. The young man regarded the name and the address on the card briefly.

"All right!" he said, depositing the coin in his pocket and the card against the mirror at his back. "I won't forget. The old boy don't have many people lookin' for him. Fact is, I don't remember he ever had anybody lookin' for him before. Are you gents friends of his? . . . No? Well, anyhow, I'll fix it."

"Funny old sneezer!" he continued. "Dippy a little up here, I guess."

He tapped himself on the forehead.

"If he had a habit I'd say sometimes he was hopped. F'r instance, he'll come in here and spiel off something to me 'bout havin' been in his Louie Kahn's drawin'-room,—anyhow, that's what it sounds like. The only Louie Kahn round here that I know of runs a junk shop over in Ninth Street. And it's a cinch that Louie Kahn ain't got no drawin'-room. Or he'll tell me he's been spendin' the day on the seabeach. Only yes'day he was handin' me that junk."

"Mightn't he have taken a little run down to Coney?" suggested Verba hopefully.

"Go to Coney—him!" scoffed the barkeeper. "Where'd he raise the coin for carfare down to Coney? You can take it from

me, gents, Old Bird forgot what the sad sea waves sound like, long time ago. I'll lay you a little eight-to-five he ain't been a quarter of a mile away from this liquor store in ten years. . . . Well, good day, gents."

"It strikes me, Verba," began Offutt as they passed out, "that possibly we're only wasting our time. If what that gabby young drink wrestler just said is right we're—"

Something wriggled at his knees and caromed off against Verba. A single bright, greedy eye appraised them both with an upward flash.

"Mister! Mister, listen!" pleaded a voice, the owner of which managed somehow to be in the path of both of them at once. "I heard yous spielin' in there. I know where Old Boid is. I kin show yous where he is."

"Where is he?" demanded Verba.

"Gimme fi' cent—gimme ten cent—first. It's a secrut. It's worth ten cent."

"It is," agreed Verba gravely. "It's worth all of ten cents now and it'll be worth a quarter more to you, sonny, if you deliver the goods."

He tendered the advance installment of the fee, and a hand, all claws like a bird's foot, snatched it away from him.

Blinky carefully pouched the dime in some unfathomable inner recess of his rags. Having provided against any attempt to separate him from the retainer in the event of the negotiations falling through, his code of honor asserted itself.

"It's a secrut. See? They ain't nobody but me and two-t'ree udder kids wise to it. Yous gotta swear you won't tell 'im nor nobody 'twas me tipped yous off. If yous did it'd spoil me graft —he'd be sore. See? Cold nights he lets us kids bunk in there wit' 'im. And daytimes we plays audience for 'im. See?"

"You play what for him?" asked Offutt.

"C'm on, an' I'll show yous," bade Blinky. "Only yous is gotta lay dead w'ile it's comin' off. See?"

"We'll lay dead," pledged Verba.

Satisfied, Blinky led the way. Mystified, they followed. He

led them back across University Place again; and on past Scudder's Family Theater, with the lowering stone frontal bone above and, below, the wide maw, bitted and gagged by its scold's bridle of snaffled iron; and on round the corner below into a fouled, dingy cross street.

Beyond the canvas marquee of a small walled-in beer garden the child went nimbly through a broken panel in a short stretch of aged and tottery wooden fencing. Wriggling through the gap behind him they found themselves in a small inclosure paved with cracked flagging. Confronting them was a short flight of iron steps, leading up to a wide, venerable-appearing doorway, which once, as the visible proof showed, had been sealed up with plank shorings, nailed on in vertical strips.

"One of the old side entrances to Scudder's," said Verba. "Where the carriages used to wait, I guess. The plot thickens —eh, Offutt?"

Offutt nodded, his eyes being on their small guide. A little sense of adventure possessed them both. They had the feeling of being co-conspirators in a little intrigue.

"Wotcher waitin' fur?" demanded Blinky. "Stick wit' me and don't make no noise." He climbed the iron steps and shoved the nail-pocked door ajar. "Watch yer step!" he counselled as he vanished within. "It's kind o' dark in yere."

Kind o' dark was right. Straining their eyes they stumbled along a black passage, with Blinky going on ahead silently. They turned once to the left and once to the right and emerged, where the light was somewhat clearer, into the shelter of a recess just behind the lower boxes of the abandoned playhouse.

"Wow!" said Verba in a sort of reverential undertone, as though he stood in the presence of death. "I haven't been here in twenty-odd years. Why, the last time I was here I was a kid!"

Veritably he did stand in the presence of death. The place looked dead and smelled dead and was dead. The air was heavy-laden with bone-yard scents—rot and corrosion and rust and dust. With the taints of moulded leather and gangrened metal, of worm-gnawed woodwork and moth-eaten fabrics, arose also

from beneath their feet that other stench which inevitably is begotten of neglect and lonesomeness within any spot inclosed by walls and a roof, provided sun and wind and human usage are excluded from it long enough. Offutt sniffed and, over Verba's shoulder, looked about him.

He could make out his immediate surroundings fairly well, for the curtains that had guarded the windows in the hip roof and round one upper side of the building were turned by decay into squares of lace-work, patterned with rents and with cracks; and in some instances they had fetched away from their fastenings altogether.

Through the glass panes, and through the grime that bleared the glass, a measure of daylight filtered, slanting in pale bluish streaks, like spilt skim milk, on vistas of the faded red-plush chairs; on the scrolled and burdened decorations of the proscenium arch; on the seamy, stained curtain; on the torn and musty hangings of the boxes; on an enormous gas chandelier which, swinging low over the pit from the domed ceiling above, was so clumped with swathings of cobweb that it had become a great, dangling grey cocoon.

Curving in wide swings from above their heads to the opposite side ran three balconies, rising one above the other, and each supported by many fat pillars. The spaces beneath these galleries were shadowy and dark, seeming to stretch away endlessly. So, too, was the perspective of the lower floor, at the back, elaborated by the gloom into a vast, yawning mouth which fairly ached with its own emptiness. But at the front the screened angles of sunlight, stippled as they were with billions of dancing motes, brought out clearly enough the stage of the old theatre and, down under the lip of the stage, the railed inclosure of the orchestra and, at either side, the scarred bulkheads and fouled drapings of the stage boxes, upper tier and lower tier.

Close at hand Offutt was aware of crawling things which might be spiders, and a long grey rat which scuffled across the floor almost beneath his feet, dragging its scaled tail over the boards with a nasty rasping sound. He heard other rats squeal-

ing and gnawing in the wainscoting behind him. He was aware, also, of the dirt, which scabbed and crusted everything. And he felt as though he had invaded the vault of an ancient tomb. Sure enough, in a manner of speaking, he had done just that.

"Some place—huh, mister?" said the small gutter-sparrow proudly, and, though he spoke in a whisper, Offutt jumped. "Stick yere, yous two," ordered the child. "Somethin'll be comin' off in a minute."

Seemingly he had caught a signal or a warning not visible to the older intruders. Leaving them, he ran briskly down a side aisle, and apparently did not care now how much noise he might make, for he whooped as he ran. He flung his papers aside and perched himself in a chair at the very front of the pit. He briskly rattled the loose back of the chair in front of him, and, inserting two dirty fingers at the corners of his mouth, emitted the shrill whistle by which a gallery god, since first gallery gods were created into an echoing world, has testified to his impatient longings that amusement be vouchsafed him.

As though the whistle had been a command, the daubed old curtain shivered and swayed. A dead thing was coming to life. Creaking dolefully, it rolled up and up until it had rolled up entirely out of sight.

A back drop, lowered at a point well down front, made the stage shallow. Once upon a time this back drop had been intended to represent a stretch of beach with blue rollers breaking on beyond. Faded as it was, and stained and cracked and scaly as it was now, the design of the artist who painted it was yet discernible; for he plainly had been one who held by the pigmented principle that all sea sands be very yellow and all sea waves be very blue.

Out of the far wings came a figure of a man, crossing the narrowed space to halt midway of the stage, close up to the tin gutter where the tipless prongs of many gas-jet footlights stood up like the tines in a garden rake. Verba's hand tightened on Offutt's arm, dragging him farther back into the shadows, and Verba's voice spoke, with a soft, tense caution, in Offutt's ear:

"Lord! Lord!" Verba almost breathed the words out. "'Backward, turn backward, O Time, in your—' Look yonder, Offutt! It's him!"

He might have spared the urging. Offutt was looking and, without being told, knew the man at whom he looked was the man the two of them had come here to find. The lone gamin in the pit clapped his talons of hands together, making a feeble, thin sound. To this applause, as to a rousing greeting, the figure behind the footlights bowed low, then straightened. And Offutt could see, by one of the slanting bars of tarnished daylight, which stabbed downward through the dusk of the place, that the man up there on the stage was a very old man, with a heavy, leonine face and heavy brows and deep-set, big grey eyes, and a splendid massive head mopped with long, coarse white hair; and he was dressed as a fop of sixty years ago and he carried himself so.

The slash of indifferent sunshine, slicing into the gloom like a dulled sword blade, rested its lowermost tip full upon him. It brought out the bleached pallor of his skin, for his face was free from any suggestion of make-up, and it showed the tears and frays in his costume, and the misshapen shoes that were on his feet, and the high-shouldered, long-tailed coat, and the soiled, collarless shirt which he wore beneath the once gorgeous velvet waistcoat.

In one hand he held, by a dainty grip on the brim, a flat-crowned derby hat, and between the fingers of the other hand twirled a slender black walking stick, with the shreds of a silken tassel adhering to it. And everything about him, barring only the shoes and the shirt, which plainly belonged to his everyday apparel, seemed fit to fall apart with age and with shabbiness.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said—and his voice filled all the empty house by reason of its strength and its toned richness—"with your kind indulgence I shall begin this entertainment with an attempt at an imitation of the elder Southern in his famous rôle of Lord Dundreary, depicting him as he appeared in one of the scenes from that sterling and popular comedy, 'Our American Cousin,' by Tom Taylor, Esquire."

With that, instantly stepping into character, he took a mincing, jaunty pace or two sideways. Half turning toward an imaginary confrère and addressing that mythical listener, he began a speech which, being pieced together with other speeches, at once lengthened into a kind of monologue. But he knew the lines—that was plain; and he knew the part, too, and for the moment lived and breathed it, and in all regards veritably was it. That, likewise, the watching pair of eavesdroppers could realize, though neither of them was of sufficient age to remember, even had he seen, the great craftsman whose work old Bateman now was counterfeiting.

The interlopers looked on and, under the spell of a wizardry, forgot indeed they were interlopers. For before their eyes they saw, wonderfully re-created, a most notable conception, and afterward would have sworn, both of them, that all of it—the drawl and the lisp, the exaggerated walk, the gestures, the play of leg and arm, the swing of body, the skew of head, the lift of eye-brow even—was as true and as faithful to the original as any mirrored image might be to the image itself.

How long they stood and watched neither Verba nor Offutt was subsequently able to say with any reasonable exactitude. It might have been four minutes; it might have been six, or even eight. When later, taking counsel together, they sought to reckon up the time, the estimates varied so widely they gave up trying to reconcile them.

This much, though, they were sure of—that, in his mumming, old Bateman rose magically triumphant above the abundant handicaps of his own years and his own physique, his garb and his environment. Doing the undoable, he for the moment threw aside his years as one might throw aside the weight of a worn-out garment, and for that moment, to suit his own designs of mimicry, made floods of strength and youthfulness course through those withered arteries.

The old man finished with a whimsical turn of his voice and a flirt of his cane to match it. He bowed himself off with the hand which held the hat at his breast, and promptly on the

second he disappeared the ancient curtain began to descend, Blinky meanwhile clapping with all his puny might.

Offutt turned to his companion. Behind the shelter of the box Verba's lean, dark face was twitching.

"Is he there? Can he act? Was I right?" Verba asked himself each question, and himself answered each with a little earnest nod. "Gee, what a find!"

"Not a find, Verba," whispered Offutt—"a resurrection—maybe. We've seen a genius in his grave."

"And we're going to dig him up." In his intentness Verba almost panted it. "Wait! Wait!" he added warningly then, though Offutt had not offered to stir. "This is going to be a Protean stunt, I take it. Let's let him show some more of his goods; for, by everything that's holy, he's got 'em!"

Up once more the curtain lifted, seemingly by its own motive power; and now the seaside drop was raised, and they beheld that, behind it, the stage had been dressed for another scene—a room in a French house. A secretaire, sadly battered and marred, stood at one side; a bookcase with broken doors and gaping, empty shelves stood at the other, balancing it off. Down stage was an armchair. Its tapestry upholstering was rotted through and a freed spiral of springs uncoiled like a slender snake from its cushioned seat. All three pieces were of a pattern—"Louie-the-Something stuff," Verba would have called them.

A table, placed fronting the chair but much nearer the right lower entrance than the chair was, and covered with a faded cloth that depended almost to the floor, belonged evidently to the same set. The scenery at the back showed a balcony, with a wide French window, open, in the middle. Beyond the window dangled a drop, dingy and discoloured as all the rest was, but displaying dimly a jumble of painted housetops and, far away in the simulated distance, the Arc de Triumphe. The colours were almost obliterated, but the suggestion of perspective remained, testifying still to the skill of the creator.

From the wings where they had seen him vanish Bateman

reappeared. The trousers and the shoes were those he had worn before; but now, thrown on over his shirt, was the melancholy wreck of what once had been a blue uniform coat, with huge epaulets upon the shoulders and gold braid upon the collar and the cuffs, and brass buttons to fasten it in double-breasted fashion down the front. Now, though, it hung open. Some of the buttons were missing, and the gold lacings were mere blackened wisps of rags.

Bateman came on slowly, with dragging feet, his arms and legs and head quivering in a violent palsy. He stared out of the window as he let himself down carefully into the ruined armchair. His first movement proved that he played a venerable, very decrepit man—a man near death from age and ailments; yet by his art he managed to project, through the fleshly and physical weaknesses of the character, a power of dignity, of dominance, and of mental authority. He rolled his head back wearily.

"My child," he said, addressing a make-believe shape before him, "I must help to receive our brave, victorious troops. See! I am fittingly dressed to do them honour."

His tones were pitched in the cracked cackle of senility. He paused, as though for an answer out of space. His inflection told as he, in turn, replied that this answer had been a remonstrance:

"No, no, no!" he said almost fiercely. "You must not seek to dissuade me."

The words stung Verba's memory, raising a welt of recollections there.

"I've got it!" he said exultantly, not forgetting though, to keep his voice down. "Siege of Berlin, by that French fellow —what's his name?—Daudet!"

"I remember the story," answered Offutt.

"I remember the play," said Verba. "Somebody dramatized it—Lord knows who—and Scudder put it on here as a curtain raiser. I saw it myself, Offutt—think of that! Sitting up yonder in the old peanut roost—a kid no bigger than that kid down

there—I saw it. And now I'm seeing it again; seeing Burt Bateman play the part of the old paralytic—you know, the old French officer who was fooled by his doctor and his granddaughter into believing the French had licked the Germans, when all the time 't was the other way and—"

"Sh-h!" counseled Offutt.

After another little wait Bateman was going on with his scene:

"Listen! Listen!" he cried, cupping a tremulous palm behind his ear. "Do you not hear them far away?—the trumpets—the trumpets of victorious France! Our forces have entered Berlin! Thank God! Thank God! All Paris will celebrate. I must greet them from the balcony."

With a mighty effort he reared himself to his feet, straightening his slanted shoulders, erecting his lolled head. His fingers fumbled at button and buttonhole, fastening his coat at the throat. He swung one arm imperiously, warding off imaginary hands.

"The trumpets! The trumpets! Hark! They come nearer and nearer! They sound for the victory of France—for a heroic army. I will go! Doctor or no doctor. I this day pay my homage to our glorious army. Stand back, ma cherie!"

Offutt, fifty feet away, caught himself straining his ears to hear those trumpets too. A rat ran across his foot and Offutt never knew it.

"They come! They come!" chuckled Bateman.

He dragged himself up stage, mounted the two stairs to the balcony, and stood in the window, at attention, to salute the tri-coloured flag. Nor did he forget to keep his face half turned to the body of the house.

He smiled; and the two unseen spies, staring at that profiled head, saw the joy that was in the smile. Then, in the same moment, the expression changed. Dumb astonishment came first—an unbelieving astonishment; then blank stupefaction; then the shock of horrified understanding; then unutterable rage.

Offutt recalled the tale from which the playlet had been evolved and Verba, for his part, recalled the playlet; but, had

neither known what they knew, the both of them, guided and informed only by the quality of Bateman's acting, still could have anticipated the climax now impending; and, lacking all prior acquaintance with the plot of it, yet would have read that the cripple, expecting to cheer his beloved French, saw advancing beneath the Arc de Triomphe the heads of the conquering Germans, and heard, above the calling bugles, not the Marseillaise, but the strains of a Teuton marching song. His back literally bristled with his hate. He spun about full face, a mortally stricken man. His clenched fists rose above his head in a command.

"To arms! To arms!" he screamed impotently, with the rattle already in his throat. "The Prussians! The Prus—"

He choked, tottered down the steps, reeled forward and fell headlong out into the room, rolling in the death spasm behind the draped table; and as, ten seconds later, the curtain began to unroll from above and lengthen down, Offutt found himself saying over and over again, mechanically:

"Why, he's gone, isn't he?"

"He kept the table between him and the house and crawled out behind it—trust him not to spoil his picture!" explained Verba. "And trust him to know the tricks of his trade." He tugged at Offutt's elbow. "Come on, boy; I've seen enough and so have you, I guess. Let's go sign him."

He fumbled at the wall.

"Side passageway back to the stage ought to be round here somewhere. Here it is—that's lucky!"

Guiding himself by the touching of his outstretched hands upon the walls of the opening, Verba felt his way behind the box, with Offutt stumbling along in his rear. So progressing, they came to an iron-sheathed door. Verba lifted its latch and they were in a place of rancid smells and cluttering stage duffel. Roaches fled in front of them. On their left a small wooden door stood partly ajar, and through the cranny they looked, as they passed, into a dressing room, where a pallet of old hangings covered half the floor space, and all manner of dingy stock costumings and stage trappings hung upon hooks.

"Here's where he must sleep," said Verba. "What a place for a white man to be living in!"

He felt for his handkerchief to wipe his soiled hands, and then together they saw Bateman advancing toward them from out of the extreme rear of the stage. Over his shoulders was thrown a robe of heavy ragged sacking and upon his face he had hung a long, false beard of white hair. He glared at them angrily. And then Offutt, in instantaneous appraisal, interpreted most surely the look out of those staring big grey eyes.

Verba extended his hand and opened his mouth to speak; but Bateman was already speaking.

"What business have you here?" he demanded. "Strangers are not permitted here during performances. How came the stage doorkeeper to admit you? He has been here too long, that doorkeeper, and he grows careless. I shall have him discharged."

"But, Mr. Bateman," began Verba, half puzzled, half insistent, "I'm in the business myself. I want to—"

"Stand aside!" ordered the old man almost violently. "You cannot have been long in the business, young sir, else you would be more mannerly than to interrupt an artist when his public calls for him. Out of my way, please!"

He strutted by them in stilted vanity and gripped the lifting ropes of the old curtain where they swung in the near angle of the wings, and pulled downward on them with an unexpected display of muscular force. The curtain rose; and as Blinky, still at his place, uplifted a little yell of approbation the old man, bending his shoulders, passed out into the center of the French drawing-room set and, extending a quivering hand, uttered sonorously the command:

"Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!"

"The mad scene from King Lear," said Offutt.

"Sure—Shakespere!" agreed Verba. "Old Scudder was a bug on that Bard stuff. So was Bateman. He used to know it from cover to cover—Othello, Hamlet, Lear—the whole string. . . . Anyhow, Offutt, I've found the only man to do the grandfather's part in that show of yours, haven't I?"

"I'm sorry to say it, Verba, but you're wrong," stated Offutt.

"How do you mean—I'm wrong?" demanded Verba irritably. Out of the corner of his mouth he aimed the protest at his companion; but his eyes, through the gap of the first entrance, were fixed on Bateman as he strode back and forth, and his ears drank in the splendid full-spoke snatches from the play. "He's not too old—if that's what you mean; he's just about old enough. And he's all there, even if he is old. Didn't you see the strength he had when he hoisted up that heavy curtain?"

"I think I know where that strength came from," said Offutt. "Just a minute, Verba—did you ever hear of the Great Auk?"

"He was in vaudeville, wasn't he?" asked Verba, still staring at Bateman. "A trick juggler or something?"

Offutt forgot to smile.

"The Great Auk was a bird," he said.

"Oh, I see; and I've been calling Bateman Old Bird," said Verba. "I get you."

"No, you don't get me," went on Offutt. "The Great Auk was a rare creature. It got rarer and rarer and they thought it had vanished. They sent an expedition to the Arctic Circle, or wherever it was the thing lived, to get one specimen for the museums; but they came back without it. And now the Great Auk is an extinct species."

"What the devil are you driving at?" snapped Verba, swinging on him.

"Listen yonder!" bade the dramatist. "That old man out yonder is telling you, himself, in better words than I could tell you."

He pointed a finger through the wings. Craning their necks, they heard the deep voice speak the lines:

> "Pray, do not mock me:
> I am a very foolish fond old man,
> Fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less;
> And, to deal plainly,
> I fear I am not in my perfect mind."

Verba hearkened and he understood. After a little he nodded in gloomy affirmation of the younger man's belief.

"I guess you're right, Offutt," he said disappointedly. "I guess I'd have seen it, too, only I was so sort of carried away. Real acting does me that way—when I see it, which ain't often."

He paused a minute in uncertainty. Then resolution came to him.

"Well," he said, "come on; there's no use of our hanging round here any longer. I'll give Blinky his quarter—he certainly earned it ten times over—and then we'll go back uptown, and I'll telephone Grainger he can have his seventy-five more a week."

"But what are we going to do about—him?" Offutt indicated whom he meant with a wave of his arm toward the stage.

It was Verba's turn. Verba knew the stage and its people and its ways as Offutt would never know them. He had been an actor, Verba had, before he turned managing director for Cohalan & Hymen.

"What are we going to do about him?" he repeated; and then, as though surprised that the other should be asking the question: "Why, nothing! Offutt, every haunted house is entitled to its ghost. This is a haunted house if ever there was one; and there's its ghost, standing out there. You mentioned an extinct species, didn't you? Well, you were dead right, son. So take your goodby look now, before we go, at the last of a great breed. There'll be no more like him, I'm thinking."

"But you can't leave him here like this!" said Offutt. "His mind is gone—you admit it yourself. They've got hospitals and asylums in this state—and homes too. It would be a mercy to take him with us."

"Mercy? It would be the dam'dest cruelty on earth!" snapped Verba. "How long do you suppose he'd live in an asylum if we tore him up by the roots and dragged him away from this place? A week? I tell you, a week would be a blamed long time. No, sir; we leave him right here. And we'll keep our mouths shut about this too. Come on!"

He tiptoed to the iron door and opened it softly. Then with his hand on the latch he halted.

Bateman was just finishing. He spoke the mad king's mad tag-line and got himself off the stage. He unreeled the stay rope from its chock. The curtain rumbled down. Through it the insistent clapping of Blinky's skinny paws could be heard.

Smiling proudly the old man listened to the sound. He forgot their presence behind him. He stood waiting. Blinky kept on applauding—Blinky was wise in his part, too. Then, still smiling, Bateman stripped off his beard, and, putting forth a bony white hand, he plucked aside the flapping curtain and stepped forth once more.

Scrouging up behind him and holding the curtain agape, they saw him bow low to the pit where Blinky was, and to the empty boxes, and to the yawning emptiness of each balcony; and they knew that to him this was not a mangy cavern of dead memories and dead traditions and dead days, peopled only by gnawing rats and crawling vermin and one lone little one-eyed street boy, but a place of living grandeurs and living triumphs. And when he spoke, then they knew he spoke, not to one but to a worshipping, clamorous host.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, with a bearing of splendid conceit, "I thank you for the ovation you have given me. To an artist—to an artist who values his art—such moments as this are most precious—"

"Come on, Offutt!" whispered Verba huskily. "Leave him taking his call."

AMONG EMINENT WRITERS OF FANTASY

LORD DUNSANY

Dramatist, teller of tales

Ireland has kept its heritage of myth and legend and its gods and fairies walk across the pages of its writers. W. B. Yeats, James Stephens, Lady Gregory, and Lord Dunsany are a few who have made Irish lore known wherever there is interest in romance. To enjoy completely the tales of Lord Dunsany, one must put mundane things away and give oneself up to the world of fancy. Gods live again and there is magic in the air. Most of all, there is witchery in the language of the tale.

The present Lord Dunsany has inherited his title and his castles from a long ancestral line that goes back to the thirteenth century. There are very few in the British empire who can boast of real Norman descent or of possessions so old. And perhaps as part of his inheritance, his tales take on the atmosphere of ancient lore.

"In answer to your question as to whether writing is a thing done by inspiration, I should say that there were two schools of writing: The one a matter of infinite pains and laborious revision, the other relying on what is conveniently described by the word 'inspiration.' I may perhaps disappoint you by saying that, since I write straight off in rather finely bound books and never revise a line, and scarcely ever a word, and try to let ideas flow freely, uninterrupted by any attempt at what I call mere cleverness,—I incline myself to the second school. But there is no reason why I should in any way be in opposition to

what you wish to teach to your pupils. The work of the first school is obviously hard, while that of the second may seem easy. But a great explosion needs a great gun to hold it; and an idea that is worthy of such a name as inspiration may well make such demands upon a writer's energies as the body can only tolerate when trained to perfect fitness. The intensities that are necessary to receive an inspiration may be left to be imagined. But one thing is certain, that whoever aspires to have any traffic whatever with inspiration must perfect a style, if he be a writer, or a craft, if he be a carpenter, that will be worthy to receive it. I do not think I have often written a line that did not satisfy a certain sense of beauty within me. That is to say, the rhythm and the words themselves, apart from the idea that they have to carry. A very few lines written carelessly and not quite coming up to the extreme standard of the judge (who can only be oneself), and that style would very soon deteriorate into a medium that would be incapable of ever doing justice to any inspiration. Very many lines written over many years, all of them satisfying the likes and standard one has, whatever that may be, may one day develop and harden into a style that will be worthy of embodying an inspiration. When such a style is come by, after years of struggling not to fall below one's highest standard, then that style is a ready home for every wandering inspiration that may come, like a dovecote carefully built for wonderful pigeons coming rarely from regions we know not."

—Dunsany.

POLTARNEES, BEHOLDER OF OCEAN [1]

Toldees, Mondath, Arizim, these are the Inner Lands, the lands whose sentinels upon their borders do not behold the sea. Beyond them to the east there lies a desert, for ever untroubled by man: all yellow it is, and spotted with shadows of stones, and Death is in it, like a leopard lying in the sun. To the south they are bounded by magic, to the west by a mountain, and to the north by the voice and anger of the Polar wind. Like a great wall is the mountain to the west. It comes up out of the distance and goes down into the distance again, and it is named Poltarnees, Beholder of Ocean. To the northward red rocks, smooth and bare of soil, and without any speck of moss or herbage, slope up to the very lips of the Polar wind, and there is nothing else there but the noise of his anger. Very peaceful are the Inner Lands, and very fair are their cities, and there is no war among them; but quiet and ease. And they have no enemy but age, for thirst and fever lie sunning themselves out in the mid-desert, and never prowl into the Inner Lands. And the ghouls and ghosts, whose highway is the night, are kept in the south by the boundary of magic. And very small are all their pleasant cities, and all men are known to one another therein, and bless one another by name as they meet in the streets. And they have a broad, green way in every city that comes in out of some vale or wood or downland, and wanders in and out about the city between the houses and across the streets; and the people walk along it never at all, but every year at her appointed time Spring walks along it from the flowery lands, causing the anemone to bloom on the green way and all the early joys of hidden woods, or deep secluded vales, or triumphant downlands, whose heads lift up so proudly, far up aloof from cities.

[1] From *A Dreamer's Tales*. Reprinted by permission of the author.

Sometimes waggoners or shepherds walk along this way, they that have come into the city from over cloudy ridges, and the townsmen hinder them not, for there is a tread that troubleth the grass and a tread that troubleth it not, and each man in his own heart knoweth which tread he hath. And in the sunlit spaces of the weald and in the wold's dark places, afar from the music of cities and from the dance of the cities afar, they make there the music of the country places and dance the country dance. Amiable, near and friendly appears to these men the sun, and he is genial to them and tends their younger vines, so they are kind to the little woodland things and any rumour of the fairies or old legend. And when the light of some little distant city makes a slight flush upon the edge of the sky, and the happy golden windows of the homesteads stare gleaming into the dark, then the old and holy figure of Romance, cloaked even to the face, comes down out of hilly woodlands and bids dark shadows to rise and dance, and sends the forest creatures forth to prowl, and lights in a moment in her bower of grass the little glow-worm's lamp, and brings a hush down over the grey lands, and out of it rises faintly on far-off hills the voice of a lute. There are not in the world lands more prosperous and happy than Toldees, Mondath, Arizim.

From these three little kingdoms that are named the Inner Lands the young men stole constantly away. One by one they went, and no one knew why they went save that they had a longing to behold the Sea. Of this longing they spoke little, but a young man would become silent for a few days, and then, one morning very early, he would slip away and slowly climb Poltarnees' difficult slope, and having attained the top pass over and never return. A few stayed behind in the Inner Lands and became old men, but none that had ever climbed Poltarnees from the very earliest times had ever come back again. Many had gone up Poltarnees sworn to return. Once a king sent all his courtiers, one by one, to report the mystery to him, and then went himself; none ever returned.

Now, it was the wont of the folk of the Inner Lands to worship

rumours and legends of the Sea, and all that their prophets discovered of the Sea was writ in a sacred book, and with deep devotion on days of festival or mourning read in the temples by the priests. Now, all their temples lay open to the west, resting upon pillars, that the breeze from the Sea might enter them, and they lay open on pillars to the east that the breezes of the Sea might not be hindered but pass onward wherever the Sea list. And this is the legend that they had of the Sea, whom none in the Inner Lands had ever beholden. They say that the Sea is a river heading towards Hercules, and they say that he touches against the edge of the world, and that Poltarnees looks upon him. They say that all the worlds of heaven go bobbing on this river and are swept down with the stream, and that Infinity is thick and furry with forests through which the river in his course sweeps on with all the worlds of heaven. Among the colossal trunks of those dark trees, the smallest fronds of whose branches are many nights, there walk the gods. And whenever its thirst, glowing in space like a great sun, comes upon the beast, the tiger of the gods creeps down to the river to drink. And the tiger of the gods drinks his fill loudly, whelming worlds the while, and the level of the river sinks between its banks ere the beast's thirst is quenched and ceases to glow like a sun. And many worlds thereby are heaped up dry and stranded, and the gods walk not among them evermore, because they are hard to their feet. These are the worlds that have no destiny, whose people know no god. And the river sweeps onwards ever. And the name of the river is Oriathon, but men call it Ocean. This is the Lower Faith of the Inner Lands. And there is a Higher Faith which is not told to all. According to the Higher Faith of the Inner Lands the river Oriathon sweeps on through the forests of Infinity and all at once falls roaring over an Edge, whence Time has long ago recalled his hours to fight in his war with the gods; and falls unlit by the flash of nights and days, with his flood unmeasured by miles, into the deeps of nothing.

Now as the centuries went by and the one way by which a man could climb Poltarnees became worn with feet, more and

more men surmounted it, not to return. And still they knew not in the Inner Lands upon what mystery Poltarnees looked. For on a still day and windless, while men walked happily about their beautiful streets or tended flocks in the country, suddenly the west wind would bestir himself and come in from the Sea. And he would come cloaked and grey and mournful and carry to someone the hungry cry of the Sea calling out for bones of men. And he that heard it would move restlessly for some hours, and at last would rise suddenly, irresistibly up, setting his face to Poltarnees, and would say, as is the custom of those lands when men part briefly, "Till a man's heart remembereth," which means "Farewell for a while"; but those that loved him, seeing his eyes on Poltarnees, would answer sadly, "Till the gods forget," which means "Farewell."

Now the King of Arizim had a daughter who played with the wild wood flowers, and with the fountains in her father's court, and with the little blue heaven-birds that came to her doorway in the winter to shelter from the snow. And she was more beautiful than the wild wood flowers, or than all the fountains in her father's court, or than the blue heaven-birds in their full winter plumage when they shelter from the snow. The old wise kings of Mondath and of Toldees saw her once as she went lightly down the little paths of her garden, and turning their gaze into the mists of thought, pondered the destiny of their Inner Lands. And they watched her closely by the stately flowers, and standing alone in the sunlight, and passing and repassing the strutting purple birds that the king's fowlers had brought from Asagéhon. When she was of the age of fifteen years the King of Mondath called a council of kings. And there met with him the kings of Toldees and Arizim. And the King of Mondath in his Council said:

"The call of the unappeased and hungry Sea (and at the word 'Sea' the three kings bowed their heads) lures every year out of our happy kingdoms more and more of our men, and still we know not the mystery of the Sea, and no devised oath has brought one man back. Now thy daughter, Arizim, is lovelier

than the sunlight, and lovelier than those stately flowers of thine that stand so tall in her garden, and hath more grace and beauty than those strange birds that the venturous fowlers bring in creaking waggons out of Asagéhon, whose feathers are alternate purple and white. Now, he that shall love thy daughter, Hilnaric, whoever he shall be, is the man to climb Poltarnees and return, as none hath ever before, and tell us upon what Poltarnees looks; for it may be that thy daughter is more beautiful than the Sea."

Then from his Seat of Council arose the King of Arizim. He said: "I fear that thou hast spoken blasphemy against the Sea, and I have a dread that ill will come of it. Indeed I had not thought she was so fair. It is such a short while ago that she was quite a small child with her hair still unkempt and not yet attired in the manner of princesses, and she would go up into the wild woods unattended and come back with her robes unseemly and all torn, and would not take reproof with humble spirit, but made grimaces even in my marble court all set about with fountains."

Then said the King of Toldees:

"Let us watch more closely and let us see the Princess Hilnaric in the season of the orchard-bloom when the great birds go by that know the Sea, to rest in our inland places; and if she be more beautiful than the sunrise over our folded kingdoms when all the orchards bloom, it may be that she is more beautiful than the Sea."

And the King of Arizim said:

"I fear this is terrible blasphemy, yet will I do as you have decided in council."

And the season of the orchard-bloom appeared. One night the King of Arizim called his daughter forth on to his outer balcony of marble. And the moon was rising huge and round and holy over dark woods, and all the fountains were singing to the night. And the moon touched the marble palace tables, and they glowed in the land. And the moon touched the heads of all the fountains, and the grey columns broke into fairy lights. And the

moon left the dark ways of the forest and lit the whole white palace and its fountains and shone on the forehead of the Princess, and the palace of Arizim glowed afar, and the fountains became columns of gleaming jewels and song. And the moon made a music at his rising, but it fell a little short of mortal ears. And Hilnaric stood there wondering, clad in white, with the moonlight shining on her forehead; and watching her from the shadows on the terrace stood the kings of Mondath and Toldees. They said:

"She is more beautiful than the moon-rise."

And on another day the King of Arizim bade his daughter forth at dawn, and they stood again upon the balcony. And the sun came up over a world of orchards, and the sea-mists went back over Poltarnees to the Sea; little wild voices arose in all the thickets, the voices of the fountains began to die, and the song arose, in all the marble temples, of the birds that are sacred to the Sea. And Hilnaric stood there, still glowing with dreams of heaven.

"She is more beautiful," said the kings, "than morning."

Yet one more trial they made of Hilnaric's beauty, for they watched her on the terraces at sunset ere yet the petals of the orchards had fallen, and all along the edge of neighbouring woods the rhododendron was blooming with the azalea. And the sun went down under craggy Poltarnees, and the sea-mist poured over his summit inland. And the marble temples stood up clear in the evening, but films of twilight were drawn between the mountain and the city. Then from the Temple ledges and eaves of palaces the bats fell headlong downwards, then spread their wings and floated up and down through darkening ways; lights came blinking out in golden windows, men cloaked themselves against the grey sea-mist, the sound of small songs arose, and the face of Hilnaric became a resting-place for mysteries and dreams.

"Than all these things," said the kings, "she is more lovely; but who can say whether she is lovelier than the Sea?"

Prone in a rhododendron thicket at the edge of the palace

lawns a hunter had waited since the sun went down. Near to him was a deep pool where the hyacinths grew and strange flowers floated upon it with broad leaves, and there the great bull gariachs came down to drink by starlight, and, waiting there for the gariachs to come, he saw the white form of the Princess leaning on her balcony. Before the stars shone out or the bulls came down to drink he left his lurking-place and moved closer to the palace to see more nearly the Princess. The palace lawns were full of untrodden dew, and everything was still when he came across them, holding his great spear. In the farthest corner of the terraces the three old kings were discussing the beauty of Hilnaric and the destiny of the Inner Lands. Moving lightly, with a hunter's tread, the watcher by the pool came very near, even in the still evening, before the Princess saw him. When he saw her closely he exclaimed suddenly:

"She must be more beautiful than the Sea."

When the Princess turned and saw his garb and his great spear she knew that he was a hunter of gariachs.

When the three kings heard the young man exclaim they said softly to one another:

"This must be the man."

Then they revealed themselves to him, and spoke to him to try him. They said:

"Sir, you have spoken blasphemy against the Sea."

And the young man muttered:

"She is more beautiful than the Sea."

And the kings said:

"We are older than you and wiser, and know that nothing is more beautiful than the Sea."

And the young man took off the gear of his head, and became downcast, and knew that he spake with kings, yet he answered:

"By this spear, she is more beautiful than the Sea."

And all the while the Princess stared at him, knowing him to be a hunter of gariachs.

Then the King of Arizim said to the watcher by the pool:

"If thou wilt go up Poltarnees and come back, as none have

come, and report to us what lure or magic is in the Sea, we will pardon thy blasphemy, and thou shalt have the Princess to wife and sit among the Council of the Kings."

And gladly thereunto the young man consented. And the Princess spoke to him, and asked him his name. And he told her that his name was Athelvok, and great joy arose in him at the sound of her voice. And to the three kings he promised to set out on the third day to scale the slope of Poltarnees and to return again, and this was the oath by which they bound him to return:

"I swear by the Sea that bears the worlds away, by the river of Oriathon, which men call Ocean, and by the gods and their tiger, and by the doom of the worlds, that I will return again to the Inner Lands, having beheld the Sea."

And that oath he swore with solemnity that very night in one of the temples of the Sea, but the three kings trusted more to the beauty of Hilnaric even than to the power of the oath.

The next day Athelvok came to the palace of Arizim with the morning, over the fields to the East and out of the country of Toldees, and Hilnaric came out along her balcony and met him on the terraces. And she asked him if he had ever slain a gariach, and he said that he had slain three, and then he told her how he had killed the first down by the pool in the wood. For he had taken his father's spear and gone down to the edge of the pool, and had lain under the azaleas there waiting for the stars to shine, by whose first light the gariachs go to the pools to drink; and he had gone too early and had had long to wait, and the passing hours seemed longer than they were. And all the birds came in that home at night, and the bat was abroad, and the hour of the duck went by, and still no gariach came down to the pool; and Athelvok felt sure that none would come. And just as this grew to a certainty in his mind the thicket parted noiselessly and a huge bull gariach stood facing him on the edge of the water, and his great horns swept out sideways from his head, and at the ends curved upwards, and were four strides in width from tip to tip. And he had not seen Athel-

vok, for the great bull was on the far side of the little pool, and Athelvok could not creep round to him for fear of meeting the wind (for the gariachs, who can see little in the dark forests, rely on hearing and smell). But he devised swiftly in his mind while the bull stood there with head erect just twenty strides from him across the water. And the bull sniffed the wind cautiously and listened, then lowered its great head down to the pool and drank. At that instant Athelvok leapt into the water and shot forward through its weedy depths among the stems of the strange flowers that floated upon broad leaves on the surface. And Athelvok kept his spear out straight before him, and the fingers of his left hand he held rigid and straight, not pointing upwards, and so did not come to the surface, but was carried onward by the strength of his spring and passed unentangled through the stems of the flowers. When Athelvok jumped into the water the bull must have thrown his head up, startled at the splash, then he would have listened and have sniffed the air, and neither hearing nor scenting any danger he must have remained rigid for some moments, for it was in that attitude that Athelvok found him as he emerged breathless at his feet. And, striking at once, Athelvok drove the spear into his throat before the head and the terrible horns came down. But Athelvok had clung to one of the great horns, and had been carried at terrible speed through the rhododendron bushes until the gariach fell, but rose at once again, and died standing up, still struggling, drowned in its own blood.

But to Hilnaric listening it was as though one of the heroes of old time had come back again in the full glory of his legendary youth.

And long time they went up and down the terraces, saying those things which were said before and since, and which lips shall yet be made to say again. And above them stood Poltarnees beholding the Sea.

And the day came when Athelvok should go. And Hilnaric said to him:

"Will you not indeed most surely come back again, having just looked over the summit of Poltarnees?"

Athelvok answered: "I will indeed come back, for thy voice is more beautiful than the hymn of the priests when they chant and praise the Sea, and though many tributary seas ran down into Oriathon and he and all the others poured their beauty into one pool below me, yet would I return swearing that thou wert fairer than they."

And Hilnaric answered:

"The wisdom of my heart tells me, or old knowledge or phophecy, or strange lore, that I shall never hear thy voice again. And for this I give thee my forgiveness."

But he, repeating the oath that he had sworn, set out, looking often backwards until the slope became too steep and his face was set to the rock. It was in the morning that he started, and he climbed all the day with little rest, where every foot-hole was smooth with many feet. Before he reached the top the sun disappeared from him, and darker and darker grew the Inner Lands. Then he pushed on so as to see before dark whatever thing Poltarnees had to show. The dusk was deep over the Inner Lands, and the lights of cities twinkled through the sea-mist, when he came to Poltarnees' summit, and the sun before him was not yet gone from the sky.

And there below him was the old wrinkled Sea, smiling and murmuring song. And he nursed little ships with gleaming sails, and in his hands were old regretted wrecks, and masts all studded over with golden nails that he had rent in anger out of beautiful galleons. And the glory of the sun was among the surges as they brought driftwood out of isles of spice, tossing their golden heads. And the grey currents crept away to the south like companionless serpents that love something afar with a restless, deadly love. And the whole plain of water glittering with late sunlight, and the surges and the currents and the white sails of ships were all together like the face of a strange new god that has looked a man for the first time in the eyes at the moment of his death; and Athelvok, looking on the wonderful Sea, knew why it was that the dead never return, for there is something that the dead feel and know, and the living would never under-

stand even though the dead should come and speak to them about it. And there was the Sea smiling at him, glad with the glory of the sun. And there was a haven there for homing ships, and a sunlit city stood upon its marge, and people walked about the streets of it clad in the unimagined merchandise of far sea-bordering lands.

An easy slope of loose crumbled rock went from the top of Poltarnees to the shore of the Sea.

For a long while Athelvok stood there regretfully, knowing that there had come something into his soul that no one in the Inner Lands could understand, where the thoughts of their minds had gone no farther than the three little kingdoms. Then, looking long upon the wandering ships, and the marvellous merchandise from alien lands, and the unknown colour that wreathed the brows of the Sea, he turned his face to the darkness and the Inner Lands.

At that moment the Sea sang a dirge at sunset for all the harm that he had done in anger and all the ruin wrought on adventurous ships; and there were tears in the voice of the tyrannous Sea, for he had loved the galleons that he had overwhelmed, and he called all men to him and all living things that he might make amends, because he had loved the bones that he had strewn afar. And Athelvok turned and set one foot upon the crumbled slope, and then another, and walked a little way to be nearer to the Sea, and then a dream came upon him and he felt that men had wronged the lovely Sea because he had been angry a little, because he had been sometimes cruel; he felt that there was trouble among the tides of the Sea because he had loved the galleons who were dead. Still he walked on and the crumbled stones rolled with him, and just as the twilight faded and a star appeared he came to the golden shore, and walked on till the surges were about his knees, and he heard the prayer-like blessings of the Sea. Long he stood thus, while the stars came out above him and shone again in the surges; more stars came wheeling in their courses up from the Sea, lights twinkled out through all the haven city, lanterns were

slung from the ships, the purple night burned on; and Earth, to the eyes of the gods as they sat afar, glowed as with one flame. Then Athelvok went into the haven city; there he met many who had left the Inner Lands before him; none of them wished to return to the people who had not seen the Sea; many of them had forgotten the three little kingdoms, and it was rumoured that one man, who had once tried to return, had found the shifting, crumbled slope impossible to climb.

Hilnaric never married. But her dowry was set aside to build a temple wherein men curse the ocean.

Once every year, with solemn rite and ceremony, they curse the tides of the Sea; and the moon looks in and hates them.

ARTHUR MACHEN

Novelist, story-writer

The name Arthur Machen has taken on a distinctly connotative literary flavor: the picture of a man who was born in the old, old town of Caerleon-on-Usk, still rife with the legends of King Arthur and other tales of romance; of a young man desirous of fame, living in a garret in London on the meagre income from an unimportant job in a publisher's office, and reading and writing during every moment he could spare; of a man, a little older, who was a newspaper man, an actor, and a writer of books with enchanting titles: *The Hill of Dreams*, *The House of Souls*, *The Secret Glory*, *Ornaments in Jade;* and finally of a man who has won a sort of literary adoration in America and England in the last few years.

The experiences of his life and his practices as a writer can be learned from his books. Read *Far-Off Things* for his autobiography, or the prefaces to his books for his literary experiences. One of the strangest accounts is that of *The Angels of Mons*, an imaginative tale of phantoms on the battlefields of the late war. It was purely imaginative fiction, but rumors of a truthful foundation took such a hold upon the public, particularly among the soldiers who testified to having seen the angels, that they are still loath to believe otherwise.

"I would say that *The Hill of Dreams* is, probably, my best work. That does not mean that I like it the best. It is a most depressing book, and I hate the whole tribe of depressing books. They are the poisonous product of the deadly age in which we live; the by-products of the all but universal damnation. When I read, I read some book of

hate the whole tribe of depressing books. They are the poisonous product of the dead age in which we live: the by-products of the all but universal demoralisation. When I read, I read some book of the days of Sanity: "Don Quixote" "The Pickwick Papers" Washington Irving's "Christmas" or the like.

But, in saying that "The Hill of Dreams" is my best work, I mean that it falls less short of the author's design than most of the others. Plan in marble: execute in mud — that has mostly been my experience.

As to my methods of writing: they may be summed up in the phrase: perseverance under continual disappointment. When I at last finished "The Hill of Dreams" I found that I had accumulated a pile of MS — rejected folios — bigger than the book itself.

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Facsimile of part of the letter from Arthur Machen to the author printed on the accompanying pages.

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"I can give no advice as to the craft of writing, because in this matter no one man can advise another. Each of us is entirely different, is faced by different problems, and has to find different solutions."

—Arthur Machen.

IN CONVERTENDO [1]

At last Ambrose Meyrick caught the famous train from Lupton to Birmingham. He had waited for many years, he had yearned and sickened for the sight of the old land of his fathers, he had not allowed the memory of Gwent to fail; and now, when the whistle sounded and the train began to move out of the station he was astonished to find himself so little uplifted by the granting of his desires. He looked up with a kind of sober joy at the railway bridge on which the poor little boy had stood so often, for so many hours, straining his eyes towards the West. He remembered that one day, when the earth burned as with fire, and his heart and soul and body were faint almost to death; he remembered how he had been refreshed with the vision of the mountain, by the wind that breathed new life into him. It was curious, he thought, how, against his own desire and his own faith, he had ceased to take daily account of such a merciful marvel as this, which should have been a perpetual talisman, a constant defence against all weariness and sickness and despair, an hourly reminder that the world was not given up entirely to the powers of darkness. He understood the difficulty of the great Act of Faith, which must be renewed day by day, again and again, by a constant exercise of the will: or else the abyss, the fall into the black pit of nonsense and despair which most people spoke of as the world, "and not half a bad place either, if you take it the right way." It was so simple, the "not half a bad place" creed; one fell in with it so easily, without any conscious effort of acquiescence; one conformed even against one's own steadfast convictions unless these were continually renewed and proclaimed. One knew better, perhaps—

[1] Reprinted from *The Shining Pyramid*, pp. 153–162, by and with permission of and special arrangement with Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., authorized publishers.

one had been vouchsafed sure proofs from within and from without; and yet it was so entirely natural to believe that man is sustained by loaves from the baker and meat from the butcher, and to take one's measures accordingly. As the train sped away to the West and the South he resolved that this should be amended, that for the future he would daily remind himself that he was fed not by baker's bread and butcher's meat, but by miracles and wonders.

But the past year had been given over to that process of dryness and fear which is called the Purgative Way. It is needful, but it lacks all refreshment and unction, speaking more of unworthiness and darkness than of light and compassions. He feared, indeed, lest he should have bowed down too low in the temple of the false gods of Lupton—though the motive had been good; but he had tried to listen sympathetically to the Doctor's sermons. And what a course it had been during the last term! The main point enforced had been that one could not arrange one's life in separate compartments without relation the one to the other, that *all* life was of infinite and equal importance, that the games and the school work were to be regarded just as seriously as the pursuits and labours of later years.

"Do not let us mistake," said the preacher one Sunday morning; "we are already inhabitants of Eternity. Here, at Lupton, in school and in the playing-fields, in our sports and in our studies, each action is of eternal import, each action forms part of that character which will be our everlasting possession."

And the whole gist of the series was that every boy who wished to be a plausible and successful humbug in after-life had better set about his task immediately.

"Remember," said the Doctor, "we are not in the Dark Ages now. None among us will ever be called upon to be the minister of a capricious and arbitrary sovereign. There is no one here whose gift of statesmanship will be exercised in concocting measures against the liberties of the people; there is no one whose military ability will be utilised in deeds of savage and remorseless oppression. We are not in the Dark Ages. There may

be future prelates in your ranks for all I know; but the Bishop of to-day is successor in name only to the mediæval hierophant.

"No. We are to serve a sovereign who wears no visible crown. . . . Remember once and for all that popularity, in its true sense, is a noble aim—nay, it is the noblest of all aims. What wonder that the Jewish populace cried 'Hosanna!' He had compassion on the *multitude*. The common people heard Him gladly. . . . Let us all beware; we are not to work for cliques, for small and select aristocratic bodies, however exquisite their tastes, however high their standards; we are to work for, to speak to, the 'multitude'—the 'common people'; we are to win popularity."

Ambrose shuddered and laughed at the recollection of this discourse and of others like it—it was clear that he had enough of such follies; it was time for him to leave behind Lupton and all its ways. Already it seemed to belong to things departed. He would return for a little while at the end of the holidays and go through such formalities as were necessary, but Lupton was over—its foolish routine, its magazines of cant, its dull pedantries, its sense of being at the centre of all things; it was all past and performed, and lay in his mind like the recollection of a tedious and unimportant play that one has witnessed and would willingly forget. Behind him all this weariness, its dolours and its languors, its pains and longings; before him was the Land of Desire, the end, and the goal, and the Perfection.

When the train reached Hereford, Lupton had vanished from his mind and all recollection of it. He had been exiled and he was returning, and when the great hills rose up before him a strange emotion beat within his breast. He did not know the precise boundaries of the counties, but at the sign of the hills he took off his hat, worshipping the dear soil of Gwent; the land had an unutterable word for him, and all his being made answer. The whole earth kept that day a great festival; he could almost have said: *Montes exultaverunt ut arietes; et colles sicut agni ovium.* It was a day of soft sunshine behind a delicate veil; the land was all in a golden, wonderful radiance, and the clear streams glit-

tered in the light, and the leaves of the trees danced with exultation in a wind blowing from the west. He looked out of the carriage window with a gaze of such ardour and delight as lovers know. *Qui convertit petram in stagna aquarum: et rupem in fontes aquarum.*

His sojourn in the dry and stony land was ended; there rushed the translucent brook down from the mountain-side, from the very heart of the rock; he fancied that he could hear the sound of the pouring waters and their voice of gladness. There was the glen that led to the wild country; the land of green, bubbling wells, and the far purple fields of heather, and the world of golden, scented gorse, where the great rocks looked like magic Druid rings. He and his father had climbed by that little path—so many years ago—to see a church of very old religion and the well of an old saint.

The brook rushed on; the line ran parallel with it for some miles. He feasted his eyes on that wonderful clear stream; he had seen no such sight since the day on which he had left Gwent, for about Lupton most of the rivers and brooks were poisonous sewers, and even the unpolluted waters were dull and muddy and sluggish as they crawled through dull fields. Here was quick crystal, which sang *Læ tare* as it poured from the hill into the valley; its pools were a shining darkness; its ripples were of silver light—it was pure as the dawn upon the mountains; it was as if the great alchemy of God had transmuted the hard, innermost rocks with all their secrets into that rejoicing brightness.

On his left hand now rose the Hill of the Apparition of St. Michael the Archangel—a strange, riven height, venerated by the people before the coming of the "Black Hag of Geneva, who sends body and soul quick to hell." Here, they said, in the old days those who knew would sometimes go apart, climbing the red height till they came to the Chapel of the Archangel, a very small and ancient place, of which the foundations still remained, standing in a thick wood of ash trees. This observance, it has been said, furnishes the explanation of the curious poem by Morvran called "The Sovereignty of the Ash." Ambrose, as he

gazed upwards the mountain, could see the wood, the boughs of the ash-trees tossing in the wind, and he remembered the poem, a strange piece of metrical ingenuity in the original, which had served as a model to many generations of bards, though none had ever equalled it in the complexity of its structure. In its lines Morvran had mingled alliteration and rhyme and assonance in a wonderful manner, and, as the poets said, besides all this there were "inspiration and unction" of such a singular magic that it was sometimes spoken of as "The Supreme Incantation of Morvran." The poem represents all the trees as contending for the honour of sovereignty:

> As the first hues of the dawn above the forest of Caerrhiu,
> There appeared a red blossom out of the shadow of the trees.
> The Rose spoke: it was like the clear chant of the angels—
> Though I am least of the trees of the wood,
> Though I am hidden and overshadowed in the wood,
> Though I dwell often in obscurity,
> Yet I claim principality in this assemblage:
> Because I am a native of the Old Garden,
> Because I typify the accomplishment of the Saints,
> Because in my blossom is hidden the Great Mystery,
> Because I waft abroad sweet odours of Paradise,
> Ancient relics of the lost kingdom.

The Hazel boasts that its boughs are the "quire of the birds of God," the Wych-elm of its potency in magic, the Oak has borne sway from all ages, the White Thorn is the "shining house of Merlin," the Yew has "an honourable station near the altars of the saints"; and so the poem ranges through all the trees of the wood, till the Ash triumphs:

> Because I keep watch over the shrine of the Chief Angel,
> Because beneath my boughs shone the Majesty of Heaven,
> Because I was a veil to the Glorious Appearance,
> Because I was visited by Heaven's high warrior:
> Mihangel is my advocate, the bearer of the Offering
> Unto the supreme altar of the Most High.

Ambrose was murmuring these last lines to himself as the train passed the base of the Mount of Apparition, and the man who

had got in at Hereford glanced around nervously and looked at the cord of communication. Ambrose saw the glance and, understanding it, was amused to think that if he had told the man in the corner a filthy story he would have been thought a very pleasant companion.

But he looked longingly at the boughs of the ash tossing in the wind on the far mountain-side, thinking of the stories told of those who retired to this shrine in "the Dark Ages." Before what was called "the flaming picture of the Chief Angel" these vowed persons would remain three whole days and nights in silent devotion, rapt, so the legends said, far out of the earthly regions and raised to the heavenly places, "to the state of Paradise," so that when they came down again to the valleys and lower places of the world they were as those who had voyaged to the Blessed Isles, since their garments were scented with celestial odours, and about them was the visible shining of light.

The train rushed on through the rich and happy meadows, by the wild thickets, by the shimmering fields of corn, by the old white farms; before his eyes now rose that well-remembered and venerable Mynydd Mawr; high upon it he could see the line of straggling beeches, and the walls of Cradock's house gleaming in the sunlight. His heart thrilled at the thought of that which rested there concealed in a dark place—of the Holy Cup in its glistering veils of samite; it was as yesterday that he bent before those ghostly splendours, and saw the images of immortal things that showed in the crystal mirror of the Blessed Work. The Golden Wood, resounding with the magic summons of the bells, the far-lifted sanctuary of Corarbennic high above the ninth wave, the vision of the saints of Britain sailing on the Faery Sea to Avalon. He could scarce see the great dome of the mountain above him, scarce rejoice in the deep woods below, scarce fix his eyes on the white walls by the beeches, for the recollection of the clearer marvels that had appeared before him. He felt as though a voice cried to him from that place; the Cup seemed to summon him to kneel once more and to behold new visions.

Cradock's house passed out of sight, and there surged up the

great wall of Mynydd Maen, and far down to the south Twyn Barlwm, the lofty height that looks far over land and sea, where the wind is like strong wine. He sank back in the seat, and wondered how he could have borne that long and weary exile. *Facti sumus sicut consolati. Venientes autem venient cum exultatione: portantes manipulos suos.*

And he wondered still more deeply by what compassions he had been preserved in that house of folly which he had inhabited, which he had entered, helpless and defenceless, a little lonely child. How was it that he had not been ruined utterly, that he had not become a "practical" man, longing for the time when he should be able to do some great work in the world—say, by sitting in the House of Commons? There were lads of his own age who were already bubbling over with enthusiasm in the cause of Humanity, who were already beginning to count the rewards that really earnest, disinterested work for one's fellow men seldom fails to procure; they pointed to young Haslee, an old Luptonian, who had changed sides twice, and was certain to be in the next Cabinet of his party, though he was barely thirty. Many of the boys, taking the Doctor's solemn warnings to heart, had already made friends who would be useful in later life—useful, that is, in forwarding them in their desire to Do some Good in the World. Ah! how had he escaped from this cesspool, from the teaching of the masters and the companionship of the boys, without losing his soul forever?

JAMES STEPHENS

Poet, novelist

"A.E." was responsible for the "discovery" of his fellow countryman and poet, Mr. Stephens. Like another fellow countryman, Lord Dunsany, Mr. Stephens makes use of Celtic legends and fairy tales. They are all poetic and lovers of the beautiful; but there their similarity ends. The art of "A.E." is the beauty of mysticism; Lord Dunsany's, the beauty of a dreamer's tales; Mr. Stephens's is the beauty of a happy combination of fancy, truth, and quaint humor.

Mr. Stephens has zealously studied the Gaelic literature and the Irish language, realizing the valuable matter for stories which he has at hand.

All normal speeds are properly in the care of the prose-writer, and it might be held that the greatest glory of a prose-writer is to be pedestrian. His problems, technically, are more numerous and more difficult than are those that engage his lyrical and epical brethren. The matter under description is, for the prose-writer, a complete interest. He cannot depart from it; nor treat it disrespectfully; nor overlook any of its parts. To observe his matter, to analyse it, and, if he can, to ornament it, is his whole duty. Like the scientist, he can refuse to be interested in God, or in any abstract matter whatever, on condition that he is thoroughly interested in matter and its modes. And, in this sphere, the perfection that he can arrive at, or aim at, is as splendid as is that of any other artist.[1]

—JAMES STEPHENS.

[1] From the Preface to his *Collected Poems*, by permission of The Macmillan Company.

THE COMING OF PAN [1]

In the centre of the pine wood called Coilla Doraca there lived not long ago two Philosophers. They were wiser than anything else in the world except the Salmon who lies in the pool of Glyn Cagny into which the nuts of knowledge fall from the hazel bush on its bank. He, of course, is the most profound of living creatures, but the two Philosophers are next to him in wisdom. Their faces looked as though they were made of parchment, there was ink under their nails, and every difficulty that was submitted to them, even by women, they were able to instantly resolve. The Grey Woman of Dun Gortin and the Thin Woman of Inis Magrath asked them the three questions which nobody had ever been able to answer, and they were able to answer them. That was how they obtained the enmity of these two women which is more valuable than the friendship of angels. The Grey Woman and the Thin Woman were so incensed at being answered that they married the two Philosophers in order to be able to pinch them in bed, but the skins of the Philosophers were so thick that they did not know they were being pinched. They repaid the fury of the women with such tender affection that these vicious creatures almost expired of chagrin, and once, in a very ecstasy of exasperation, after having been kissed by their husbands, they uttered the fourteen hundred maledictions which comprised their wisdom, and these were learned by the Philosophers who thus became even wiser than before.

In due process of time two children were born of these marriages. They were born on the same day and in the same hour, and they were only different in this, that one of them was a boy and the other one was a girl. Nobody was able to tell how this

[1] From *The Crock of Gold.* Reprinted by permission of The Macmillan Company.

had happened and, for the first time in their lives, the Philosophers were forced to admire an event which they had been unable to prognosticate; but having proved by many different methods that the children were really children, that what must be must be, that a fact cannot be controverted, and that what has happened once may happen twice, they described the occurrence as extraordinary but not unnatural, and submitted peacefully to a Providence even wiser than they were.

The Philosopher who had the boy was very pleased because, he said, there were too many women in the world, and the Philosopher who had the girl was very pleased also because, he said, you cannot have too much of a good thing: the Grey Woman and the Thin Woman, however, were not in the least softened by maternity—they said that they had not bargained for it, that the children were gotten under false pretences, that they were respectable married women, and that, as a protest against their wrongs, they would not cook any more food for the Philosophers. This was pleasant news for their husbands who disliked the women's cooking very much, but they did not say so, for the women would certainly have insisted on their rights to cook had they imagined their husbands disliked the results: therefore, the Philosophers besought their wives every day to cook one of their lovely dinners again, and this the women always refused to do.

They all lived together in a small house in the very centre of a dark pine wood. Into this place the sun never shone because the shade was too deep, and no wind ever came there either because the boughs were too thick, so that it was the most solitary and quiet place in the world, and the Philosophers were able to hear each other thinking all day long, or making speeches to each other, and these were the pleasantest sounds they knew of. To them there were only two kinds of sounds anywhere—these were conversation and noise: they liked the first very much indeed, but they spoke of the second with stern disapproval, and, even when it was made by a bird, a breeze, or a shower of rain, they grew angry and demanded that it should be

abolished. Their wives seldom spoke at all and yet they were never silent: they communicated with each other by a kind of physical telegraphy which they had learned among the Shee—they cracked their finger joints quickly or slowly and so were able to communicate with each other over immense distances, for by dint of long practice they could make great explosive sounds which were nearly like thunder and gentler sounds like the tapping of grey ashes on a hearthstone. The Thin Woman hated her own child, but she loved the Grey Woman's baby, and the Grey Woman loved the Thin Woman's infant but could not abide her own. A compromise may put an end to the most perplexing of situations and, consequently, the two women swapped children, and at once became the most tender and amiable mothers imaginable, and the families were able to live together in a more perfect amity than could be found anywhere else.

The children grew in grace and comeliness. At first the little boy was short and fat and the little girl was long and thin, then the little girl became round and chubby while the little boy grew lanky and wiry. This was because the little girl used to sit very quiet and be good and the little boy used not.

They lived for many years in the deep seclusion of the pine wood wherein a perpetual twilight reigned, and here they were wont to play their childish games, flitting among the shadowy trees like little quick shadows. At times their mothers, the Grey Woman and the Thin Woman, played with them, but this was seldom, and sometimes their fathers, the two Philosophers, came out and looked at them through spectacles which were very round and very glassy, and had immense circles of horn all round the edges. They had, however, other playmates with whom they could romp all day long. There were hundreds of rabbits running about in the brushwood; they were full of fun and were very fond of playing with the children. There were squirrels who joined cheerfully in their games, and some goats, having one day strayed in from the big world, were made so welcome that they always came again whenever they got the

chance. There were birds also, crows and blackbirds and willy-wagtails, who were well acquainted with the younsters, and visited them as frequently as their busy lives permitted.

At a short distance from their home there was a clearing in the wood about ten feet square; through this clearing, as through a funnel, the sun for a few hours in the summer time blazed down. It was the boy who first discovered the strange radiant shaft in the wood. One day he had been sent out to collect pine cones for the fire. As these were gathered daily the supply immediately near the house was scanty, therefore he had, while searching for more, wandered further from his home than usual. The first sight of the extraordinary blaze astonished him. He had never seen anything like it before, and the steady, unwinking glare aroused his fear and curiosity equally. Curiosity will conquer fear even more than bravery will; indeed, it has led many people into dangers which mere physical courage would shudder away from, for hunger and love and curiosity are the great impelling forces of life. When the little boy found that the light did not move he drew closer to it, and at last, emboldened by curiosity, he stepped right into it and found that it was not a thing at all. The instant that he stepped into the light he found it was hot, and this so frightened him that he jumped out of it again and ran behind a tree. Then he jumped into it for a moment and out of it again, and for nearly half an hour he played a splendid game of tip and tig with the sunlight. At last he grew quite bold and stood in it and found that it did not burn him at all, but he did not like to remain in it fearing that he might be cooked. When he went home with the pine cones he said nothing to the Grey Woman of Dun Gortin or to the Thin Woman of Inis Magrath or to the two philosophers, but he told the little girl all about it when they went to bed, and every day afterwards they used to go and play with the sunlight, and the rabbits and the squirrels would follow them there and join in their games with twice the interest they had shown before.

To the lonely house in the pine wood people sometimes came

for advice on subjects too recondite for even those extremes of elucidation, the parish priest and the tavern. These people were always well received, and their perplexities were attended to instantly, for the Philosophers liked being wise and they were not ashamed to put their learning to the proof, nor were they, as so many wise people are, fearful lest they should become poor or less respected by giving away their knowledge. These were favourite maxims with them:

You must be fit to give before you can be fit to receive.
Knowledge becomes lumber in a week, therefore, get rid of it.
The box must be emptied before it can be refilled.
Refilling is progress.
A sword, a spade, and a thought should never be allowed to rust.

The Grey Woman and the Thin Woman, however, held opinions quite contrary to these, and their maxims also were different:

A secret is a weapon and a friend.
Man is God's secret, Power is man's secret, Sex is woman's secret.
By having much you are fitted to have more.
There is always room in the box.
The art of packing is the last lecture of wisdom.
The scalp of your enemy is progress.

Holding these opposed views it seemed likely that visitors seeking for advice from the Philosophers might be astonished and captured by their wives; but the women were true to their own doctrines and refused to part with information to any persons saving only those of high rank, such as policemen, gombeen men, and district and county councillors; but even to these they charged high prices for their information, and a bonus on any gains which accrued through the following of their advices. It is unnecessary to state that their following was small when compared with those who sought the assistance of their husbands, for scarcely a week passed but some person came through the pine wood with his brows in a tangle of perplexity.

In these people the children were deeply interested. They used to go apart afterwards and talk about them, and would try to remember what they looked like, how they talked, and their manner of walking or taking snuff. After a time they became interested in the problems which these people submitted to their parents, and the replies or instructions wherewith the latter relieved them. Long training had made the children able to sit perfectly quiet, so that when the talk came to the interesting part they were entirely forgotten, and ideas which might otherwise have been spared their youth became commonplaces of their conversation.

When the children were ten years of age one of the philosophers died. He called the household together and announced that the time had come when he must bid them all good-bye, and that his intention was to die as quickly as might be. It was, he continued, an unfortunate thing that his health was at the moment more robust than it had been for a long time, but that, of course, was no obstacle to his resolution, for death did not depend upon ill-health but upon a multitude of other factors with the details whereof he would not trouble them.

His wife, the Grey Woman of Dun Gortin, applauded this resolution and added as an amendment that it was high time he did something, that the life he had been leading was an arid and unprofitable one, that he had stolen her fourteen hundred maledictions for which he had no use and presented her with a child for which she had none, and that, all things concerned, the sooner he did die and stop talking the sooner everybody concerned would be made happy.

The other Philosopher replied mildly as he lit his pipe:

"Brother, the greatest of all virtues is curiosity, and the end of all desire is wisdom; tell us, therefore, by what steps you have arrived at this commendable resolution."

To this the Philosopher replied:

"I have attained to all the wisdom which I am fitted to bear. In the space of one week no new truth has come to me. All that I have read lately I knew before; all that I have thought has

been but a recapitulation of old and wearisome ideas. There is no longer an horizon before my eyes. Space has narrowed to the petty dimensions of my thumb. Time is the tick of a clock. Good and evil are two peas in the one pod. My wife's face is the same for ever. I want to play with the children, and yet I do not want to. Your conversation with me, brother, is like the droning of a bee in a dark cell. The pine trees take root and grow and die.—It's all bosh. Good-bye."

His friend replied:

"Brother, these are weighty reflections and I do clearly perceive that the time has come for you to stop. I might observe, not in order to combat your views, but merely to continue an interesting conversation, that there are still some knowledges which you have not assimilated—you do not yet know how to play the tambourine, nor how to be nice to your wife, nor how to get up first in the morning and cook the breakfast. Have you learned how to smoke strong tobacco as I do? or can you dance in the moonlight with a woman of the Shee? To understand the theory which underlies all things is not sufficient. Theory is but the preparation for practice. It has occurred to me, brother, that wisdom may not be the end of everything. Goodness and kindliness are, perhaps, beyond wisdom. Is it not possible that the ultimate end is gaiety and music and a dance of joy? Wisdom is the oldest of all things. Wisdom is all head and no heart. Behold, brother, you are being crushed under the weight of your head. You are dying of old age while you are yet a child."

"Brother," replied the other Philosopher, "your voice is like the droning of a bee in a dark cell. If in my latter days I am reduced to playing on the tambourine, and running after a hag in the moonlight, and cooking your breakfast in the grey morning, then it is indeed time that I should die. Good-bye, brother."

So saying the Philosopher arose and removed all the furniture to the sides of the room so that there was a clear space left in the centre. He then took off his boots and his coat, and stand-

ing on his toes he commenced to gyrate with extraordinary rapidity. In a few moments his movements became steady and swift, and a sound came from him like the humming of a swift saw; this sound grew deeper and deeper, and at last continuous, so that the room was filled with a thrilling noise. In a quarter of an hour the movement began to noticeably slacken. In another three minutes it was quite slow. In two more minutes he grew visible again as a body, and then he wobbled to and fro, and at last dropped in a heap on the floor. He was quite dead, and on his face was an expression of serene beatitude.

"God be with you, brother," said the remaining Philosopher, and he lit his pipe, focussed his vision on the extreme tip of his nose, and began to meditate profoundly on the aphorism whether the good is the all or the all is the good. In another moment he would have become oblivious of the room, the company, and the corpse, but the Grey Woman of Dun Gortin shattered his meditation by a demand for advice as to what should next be done. The Philosopher, with an effort, detached his eyes from his nose and his mind from his maxim.

"Chaos," said he, "is the first condition. Order is the first law. Continuity is the first reflection. Quietude is the first happiness. Our brother is dead—bury him," so saying, he returned his eyes to his nose, and his mind to his maxim, and lapsed to a profound reflection wherein nothing sat perched on insubstantiality, and the Spirit of Artifice goggled at the puzzle.

The Grey Woman of Dun Gortin took a pinch of snuff from her box and raised the keen over her husband:

"You were my husband and you are dead.

It is wisdom that has killed you.

If you had listened to my wisdom instead of to your own you would still be a trouble to me and I would still be happy.

Women are stronger than men—they do not die of wisdom.

They are better than men because they do not seek wisdom.

They are wiser than men because they know less and understand more.

Wise men are thieves—they steal wisdom from the neighbours.

I had fourteen hundred maledictions, my little store, and by a trick you stole them and left me empty.

You stole my wisdom and it has broken your neck.

I lost my knowledge and I am yet alive raising the keen over your body, but it was too heavy for you, my little knowledge.

You will never go out into the pine wood in the morning, or wander abroad on a night of stars. You will not sit in the chimney-corner on the hard nights, or go to bed, or rise again, or do anything at all from this day out.

Who will gather pine cones now when the fire is going down, or call my name in the empty house, or be angry when the kettle is not boiling?

Now I am desolate indeed. I have no knowledge, I have no husband, I have no more to say."

"If I had anything better you should have it," said she politely to the Thin Woman of Inis Magrath.

"Thank you," said the Thin Woman, "it was very nice. Shall I begin now? My husband is meditating and we may be able to annoy him."

"Don't trouble yourself," replied the other, "I am past enjoyment and am, moreover, a respectable woman."

"That is no more than the truth, indeed."

"I have always done the right thing at the right time."

"I'd be the last body in the world to deny that," was the warm response.

"Very well, then," said the Grey Woman, and she commenced to take off her boots. She stood in the centre of the room and balanced herself on her toe.

"You are a decent, respectable lady," said the Thin Woman of Inis Magrath, and then the Grey Woman began to gyrate rapidly and more rapidly until she was a very fervour of motion, and in three-quarters of an hour (for she was very tough) she began to slacken, grew visible, wobbled, and fell beside her dead husband, and on her face was a beatitude almost surpassing his.

The Thin Woman of Inis Magrath smacked the children and put them to bed, next she buried the two bodies under the

hearthstone, and then, with some trouble, detached her husband from his meditations. When he became capable of ordinary occurrences she detailed all that had happened, and said that he alone was to blame for the sad bereavement. He replied—

"The toxin generates the anti-toxin. The end lies concealed in the beginning. All bodies grow around a skeleton. Life is a petticoat about death. I will not go to bed."

On the day following this melancholy occurrence Meehawl MacMurrachu, a small farmer in the neighbourhood, came through the pine trees with tangled brows. At the door of the little house he said, "God be with all here," and marched in.

The Philosopher removed his pipe from his lips—

"God be with yourself," said he, and he replaced his pipe.

Meehawl MacMurrachu crooked his thumb at space—

"Where is the other one?" said he.

"Ah!" said the Philosopher.

"He might be outside, maybe?"

"He might, indeed," said the Philosopher gravely.

"Well, it doesn't matter," said the visitor, "for you have enough knowledge by yourself to stock a shop. The reason I came here to-day was to ask your honoured advice about my wife's washing-board. She only has it a couple of years and the last time she used it was when she washed out my Sunday shirt and her black skirt with the red things on it—you know the one?"

"I do not," said the Philosopher.

"Well, anyhow, the washboard is gone, and my wife says it was either taken by the fairies or by Bessie Hannigan—you know Bessie Hannigan? She has whiskers like a goat and a lame leg!"—

"I do not," said the Philosopher.

"No matter," said Meehawl MacMurrachu. "She didn't take it, because my wife got her out yesterday and kept her talking for two hours while I went through everything in her bit of a house—the washboard wasn't there."

"It wouldn't be," said the Philosopher.

"Maybe your honour could tell a body where it is then?"

"Maybe I could," said the Philosopher, "are you listening?"

"I am," said Meehawl MacMurrachu.

The Philosopher drew his chair closer to the visitor until their knees were jammed together. He laid both his hands on Meehawl MacMurrachu's knees—

"Washing is an extraordinary custom," said he. "We are washed both on coming into the world and on going out of it, and we take no pleasure from the first washing nor any profit from the last."

"True for you, sir," said Meehawl MacMurrachu.

"Many people consider that scourings supplementary to these are only due to habit. Now, habit is continuity of action, it is a most detestable thing and is very difficult to get away from. A proverb will run where a writ will not, and the follies of our fore-fathers are of greater importance to us than is the well-being of our posterity."

"I wouldn't say a word against that, sir," said Meehawl MacMurrachu.

"Cats are a philosophic and thoughtful race, but they do not admit the efficacy of either water or soap, and yet it is usually conceded that they are cleanly folk. There are exceptions to every rule, and I once knew a cat who lusted after water and bathed daily, he was an unnatural brute and died ultimately of the head staggers. Children are nearly as wise as cats. It is true that they will utilise water in a variety of ways, for instance, the destruction of a table cloth or a pinafore, and I have observed them greasing a ladder with soap, showing in the process a great knowledge of the properties of this material."

"Why shouldn't they, to be sure?" said Meehawl MacMurrachu. "Have you got a match, sir?"

"I have not," said the Philosopher. "Sparrows, again, are a highly acute and reasonable folk. They use water to quench thirst, but when they are dirty they take a dust bath and are at once cleansed. Of course, birds are often seen in the water, but they go there to catch fish and not to wash. I have often

fancied that fish are a dirty, sly, and unintelligent people—this is due to their staying so much in the water, and it has been observed that on being removed from this element they at once expire through sheer ecstasy at escaping from their prolonged washing."

"I have seen them doing it myself," said Meehawl. "Did you ever hear, sir, about the fish that Paudeen MacLoughlin caught in the policeman's hat?"

"I did not," said the Philosopher. "The first person who washed was possibly a person seeking a cheap notoriety. Any fool can wash himself, but every wise man knows that it is an unnecessary labour, for nature will quickly reduce him to a natural and healthy dirtiness again. We should seek, therefore, not how to make ourselves clean, but how to attain a more unique and splendid dirtiness, and perhaps the accumulated layers of matter might, by ordinary geologic compulsion, become incorporated with the human cuticle and so render clothing unnecessary—"

"About the washboard," said Meehawl, "I was just going to say—"

"It doesn't matter," said the Philosopher. "In its proper place I admit the necessity for water. As a thing to sail a ship on it can scarcely be surpassed (not, you will understand, that I entirely approve of ships, they tend to create and perpetuate international curiosity and the smaller vermin of different latitudes). As an element wherewith to put out a fire, or brew tea, or make a slide in winter it is useful, but in a tin basin it has a repulsive and meagre aspect.—Now as to your wife's washboard—"

"Good luck to your honour," said Meehawl.

"Your wife says that either the fairies or a woman with a goat's leg has it."

"It's her whiskers," said Meehawl.

"They are lame," said the Philosopher sternly.

"Have it your own way, sir, I'm not certain now how the creature is afflicted."

"You say that this unhealthy woman has not got your wife's washboard. It remains, therefore, that the fairies have it."

"It looks that way," said Meehawl.

"There are six clans of fairies living in this neighbourhood; but the process of elimination which has shaped the world to a globe, the ant to its environment, and man to the captaincy of the vertebrates, will not fail in this instance, either."

"Did you ever see anything like the way wasps have increased this season?" said Meehawl; "faith, you can't sit down anywhere but your breeches—"

"I did not," said the Philosopher. "Did you leave out a pan of milk on last Tuesday?"

"I did then."

"Do you take off your hat when you meet a dust twirl?"

"I wouldn't neglect that," said Meehawl.

"Did you cut down a thorn bush recently?"

"I'd sooner cut my eye out," said Meehawl, "and go about as wall-eyed as Lorcan O'Nualain's ass: I would that. Did you ever see his ass, sir? It—"

"I did not," said the Philosopher. "Did you kill a robin redbreast?"

"Never," said Meehawl. "By the pipers," he added, "that old skinny cat of mine caught a bird on the roof yesterday."

"Hah!" cried the Philosopher, moving, if it were possible, even closer to his client, "now we have it. It is the Leprecauns of Gort na Cloca Mora took your washboard. Go to the Gort at once. There is a hole under a tree in the south-east of the field. Try what you will find in that hole."

"I'll do that," said Meehawl. "Did you ever—"

"I did not," said the Philosopher.

So Meehawl MacMurrachu went away and did as he had been bidden, and underneath the tree of Gort na Cloca Mora he found a little crock of gold.

"There's a power of washboards in that," said he.

By reason of this incident the fame of the Philosopher became even greater than it had been before, and also by reason of it

many singular events were to happen with which you shall duly become acquainted.

It so happened that the Leprecauns of Gort na Cloca Mora were not thankful to the Philosopher for having sent Meehawl MacMurrachu to their field. In stealing Meehawl's property they were quite within their rights because their bird had undoubtedly been slain by his cat. Not alone, therefore, was their righteous vengeance nullified, but the crock of gold which had taken their community many thousands of years to amass was stolen. A Leprecaun without a pot of gold is like a rose without perfume, a bird without a wing, or an inside without an outside. They considered that the Philosopher had treated them badly, that his action was mischievous and unneighbourly, and that until they were adequately compensated for their loss both of treasure and dignity, no conditions other than those of enmity could exist between their people and the little house in the pine wood. Furthermore, for them the situation was cruelly complicated. They were unable to organise a direct, personal hostility against their new enemy, because the Thin Woman of Inis Magrath would certainly protect her husband. She belonged to the Shee of Croghan Conghaile who had relatives in every fairy fort in Ireland, and were also strongly represented in the forts and duns of their immediate neighbours. They could, of course, have called an extraordinary meeting of the Sheogs, Leprecauns, and Cluricauns, and presented their case with a claim for damages against the Shee of Croghan Conghaile, but that Clann would assuredly repudiate any liability on the ground that no member of their fraternity was responsible for the outrage as it was the Philosopher, and not the Thin Woman of Inis Magrath, who had done the deed. Notwithstanding this they were unwilling to let the matter rest, and the fact that justice was out of reach only added fury to their anger.

One of their number was sent to interview the Thin Woman of Inis Magrath, and the others concentrated nightly about the dwelling of Meehawl MacMurrachu in an endeavor to recapture

the treasure, which they were quite satisfied was hopeless. They found that Meehawl, who understood the customs of the Earth Folk very well, had buried the crock of gold beneath a thorn bush, thereby placing it under the protection of every fairy in the world—the Leprecauns themselves included; and until it was removed from this place by human hands they were bound to respect its hiding-place, and even guarantee its safety with their blood.

They afflicted Meehawl with an extraordinary attack of rheumatism and his wife with an equally virulent sciatica, but they got no lasting pleasure from their groans.

The Leprecaun, who had been detailed to visit the Thin Woman of Inis Magrath, duly arrived at the cottage in the pine wood and made his complaint. The little man wept as he told the story, and the two children wept out of sympathy for him. The Thin Woman said she was desperately grieved by the whole unpleasant transaction, and that all her sympathies were with Gort na Cloca Mora, but that she must disassociate herself from any responsibility in the matter as it was her husband who was the culpable person, and that she had no control over his mental processes, which, she concluded, was one of the seven curious things in the world.

As her husband was away in a distant part of the wood nothing further could be done at that time, so the Leprecaun returned again to his fellows without any good news, but he promised to come back early on the following day.

When the Philosopher came home late that night the Thin Woman was waiting up for him.

"Woman," said the Philosopher, "you ought to be in bed."

"Ought I indeed?" said the Thin Woman. "I'd have you know that I'll go to bed when I like and get up when I like without asking your or any one else's permission."

"That is not true," said the Philosopher. "You get sleepy whether you like it or not, and you awaken again without your permission being asked. Like many other customs such as singing, dancing, music, and acting, sleep has crept into popular

favour as part of a religious ceremonial. Nowhere can one go to sleep more easily than in a church."

"Do you know," said the Thin Woman, "that a Leprecaun came here to-day?"

"I do not," said the Philosopher, "and notwithstanding the innumerable centuries which have elapsed since that first sleeper (probably with extreme difficulty) sank into his religious trance, we can to-day sleep through a religious ceremony with an ease which would have been a source of wealth and fame to that prehistoric worshipper and his acolytes."

"Are you going to listen to what I am telling you about the Leprecaun?" said the Thin Woman.

"I am not," said the Philosopher. "It has been suggested that we go to sleep at night because it is then too dark to do anything else; but owls, who are a venerably sagacious folk, do not sleep in the night-time. Bats, also, are a very clear-minded race; they sleep in the broadest day, and they do it in a charming manner. They clutch the branch of a tree with their toes and hang head downwards—a position which I consider singularly happy, for the rush of blood to the head consequent on this inverted position should engender a drowsiness and a certain imbecility of mind which must either sleep or explode."

"Will you never be done talking?" shouted the Thin Woman passionately.

"I will not," said the Philosopher. "In certain ways sleep is useful. It is an excellent way of listening to an opera or seeing pictures on a bioscope. As a medium for day-dreams I know of nothing that can equal it. As an accomplishment it is graceful, but as a means of spending a night it is intolerably ridiculous. If you were going to say anything, my love, please say it now, but you should always remember to think before you speak. A woman should be seen seldom but never heard. Quietness is the beginning of virtue. To be silent is to be beautiful. Stars do not make a noise. Children should always be in bed. These are serious truths, which cannot be controverted; therefore silence is fitting as regards them."

"Your stirabout is on the hob," said the Thin Woman. "You can get it for yourself. I would not move the breadth of my nail if you were dying of hunger. I hope there's lumps in it. A Leprecaun from Gort na Cloca Mora was here to-day. They'll give it to you for robbing their pot of gold. You old thief, you! you lob-eared, crock-kneed fat-eye!"

The Thin Woman whizzed suddenly from where she stood and leaped into bed. From beneath the blanket she turned a vivid, furious eye on her husband. She was trying to give him rheumatism and toothache and lockjaw all at once. If she had been satisfied to concentrate her attention on one only of these torments she might have succeeded in afflicting her husband according to her wish, but she was not able to do that.

"Finality is death. Perfection is finality. Nothing is perfect. There are lumps in it," said the Philosopher.

WALTER DE LA MARE

Poet, story-writer

"Literary composition is one of the most laborious of all human activities." It is difficult to realize the laborious activity that creates any work of art. It is particularly difficult in such imaginative fiction as Mr. de la Mare's, which has such an air of charm and whimsicality and easy manner. Imagine a midget so small that she could stand in the palm of one's hand, yet possessing the attributes of other intelligent and normal human beings: a perfect form and a keen mind. Suppose that this little person should write her autobiography. It would be full of strange happenings in a strange world, even though it would still be our world. Yet it would be real withal —full of humor and pathos. Such an "autobiography" Mr. de la Mare has written in *The Memoirs of a Midget.* The more one thinks about its creation, the more astonished one is at its possible difficulties. Besides the labor of construction, there is the far greater task of making the improbable seem real. There is too much room for discrepancies to creep in. Yet, once having adapted himself to the midget's point of view, the reader finds the tale consistent—not by a conscious analysis of its consistency, but by never being made aware that such and such an event could not have happened.

"Writers so dissimilar as Dr. Johnson and Cardinal Newman have declared that literary composition is one of the most laborious of all human activities, and if my own very limited experience is of any value, it convinces me that the difficulties involved in the craft of writing by no means diminish with practice. New problems present

themselves, and though some difficulties may be overcome by frequent exploration of them, others seem inevitably to take their place. Whatever natural gifts a writer may possess, all the evidence goes to prove that only constant hard and even painful work can do them justice."

—Walter de la Mare.

MEMOIRS OF A MIDGET[1]

When precisely I began to speculate *why* I was despatched into this world so minute and different I cannot say. Pretty early, I fancy, though few opportunities for comparison were afforded me, and for some time I supposed that all young children were of my stature. There was Adam Waggett, it is true, the bumpkin son of a village friend of Mrs. Ballard's. But he was some years older than I. He would be invited to tea in the kitchen, and was never at rest unless stuffing himself out with bread-and-dripping or dough-cake—victuals naturally odious to me; or pestering me with his coarse fooling and curiosity. He was to prove useful in due season; but in those days I had a distaste for him almost as deep-rooted as that for "Hoppy," the village idiot—though I saw poor Hoppy only once.

Whatever the reason may be, except in extremely desperate moments, I do not remember much regretting that I was not of the common size. Still, the realization was gradually borne in on me that I was a disappointment and mischance to my parents. Yet I never dared to let fall a question which was to be often in my young thoughts: "Tell me, mamma, are you sorry that your little daughter is a Midget?" But then, does any one ask questions like that until they cannot be answered?

Still, cross-examine her I did occasionally.

"Where did I come from, mamma?"

"Why, my dear, I am your mother."

"Just," I replied, "like Pollie's mother is *her* mother?"

She cast a glance at me from eyes that appeared to be very small, unless for that instant it was mine that I saw reflected there.

[1] Chapter II from *Memoirs of a Midget.* Reprinted by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., and James B. Pinker and Son, Inc.

"Yes, my dear," she replied at length. "We come and we go." She seemed tired with the heat of the day, so I sate quietly, holding her finger, until she was recovered.

Only, perhaps, on account of my size was there any occasion for me to be thoroughly ashamed of myself. Otherwise I was, if anything, a rather precocious child. I could walk a step or two at eleven months, and began to talk before the Christmas following the first anniversary of my birthday, August 30th. I learned my letters from the big black capitals in the Book of Genesis; and to count and cipher from a beautiful little Abacus strung with beads of silver and garnets. The usual ailments came my way, but were light come, light go. I was remarkably sinewy and muscular, strong in the chest, and never suffered from snuffling colds or from chilblains, though shoes and gloves have always been a difficulty.

I can perfectly recall my childish figure as I stood with endless satisfaction surveying my reflection in a looking-glass on the Christmas morning after my ninth birthday. My frock was of a fine puffed scarlet, my slippers loose at heel, to match. My hair, demurely parted in the middle, hung straight on my narrow shoulders (though I had already learned to plait it) and so framed my face; the eyebrows faintly arched (eyebrows darker and crookeder now), the nose in proportion; the lips rather narrow, and of a lively red.

My features wore a penetrating expression in that reflection because my keen look was searching them pretty close. But if it was a sharp look, it was not, I think, a bold or defiant; and then I smiled, as if to say, "So this is to be my companion, then?"

It was winter, and frost was on the window that day. I enjoyed the crisp air, for I was packed warm in lamb's-wool underneath. There I stood, my father's round red face beaming on one side of the table, my mother's smiling but enigmatic, scrutinizing my reflection on the other, and myself tippeting this way and that—a veritable miniature of Vanity.

Who should be ushered at this moment into the room, where

we were so happy, but my godmother, Miss Fenne, come to bring my father and mother her Christmas greetings and me a little catechism sewn up in a pink silk cover. She was a bent-up old lady and a rapid talker, with a voice which, though small, jangled every nerve in my body, like a pencil on a slate. Being my godmother, she took great liberties in counselling my parents on the proper way of "managing" me. The only time, indeed, I ever heard my father utter an oath was when Miss Fenne was just beyond hearing. She peered across at me on this Christmas morning like a bird at a scorpion: "Caroline, Caroline," she cried, "for shame! The Shrimp! You will turn the child's head."

Shrimp! I had seen the loathsome, doubled-up creatures (in their boiled state) on a kitchen plate. My blood turned to vinegar; and in rage and shame I fell all of a heap on the table, hiding from her sight my face and my hands as best I could under my clothes, and wishing that I might vanish away from the world altogether.

My father's voice boomed out in protest; my mother took me into her arms to soothe and scold me; but long after the ruffled old lady had taken her departure I brooded on this affront. "Away, away!" a voice seemed to cry within; and I listened to it as if under a spell. All that day I nursed my wounded vanity, and the same evening after candle light, I found myself for a moment alone in the kitchen. Pollie had gone to the wood-shed to fetch kindling, leaving the door into the garden ajar. The night air touched my cheek. Half beside myself with desire of I know not what, I sprang out from the doorstep into an inch or so of snow, and picking myself up, ran off into the darkness under the huge sky.

It was bitterly cold. Frost had crusted the virgin surface of the snow. My light footsteps can hardly have shattered its upper crystals. I ran on and on into the ghostly world, into this stiff, marvelous, gloating scene of frozen vegetation beneath that immense vacancy. A kind of stupor must have spread over my young mind. It seemed I was transported out of myself under the stars, in the mute presence of the Watchman of

Heaven. I stood there lost in wonder in the gray, luminous gloom.

But my escapade was brief and humiliating. The shock of the cold, the excitement, quickly exhausted me. I threw myself down and covered my face with my hands, trying in vain to stifle my sobs. What was my longing? Where its satisfaction? Soft as wool a drowsiness stole over my senses that might swiftly have wafted me off on the last voyage of discovery. But I had been missed. A few minutes' search, and Pollie discovered me lying there by the frozen cabbage stalks. The woeful Mænad was carried back into the kitchen again—a hot bath, a hot posset, and a few anxious and thankful tears.

The wonder is, that, being an only child, and a sore problem when any question of discipline or punishment arose, I was not utterly spoiled. One person at least came very near to doing so, my grandfather, Monsieur Pierre de Ronvel. To be exact, he was my step-grandfather, for my mother's charming mother, with her ringlets and crinoline, after my real grandfather's death, had married a second time. He crossed the English Channel to visit my parents when I was in my tenth year—a tall, stiff, jerky man, with a sallow face, speckled fur-like hair that stood in a little wall around his forehead, and the liveliest black eyes. His manners were a felicity to watch even at my age. You would have supposed he had come *courting* my mother; and he took a great fancy to me. He was extremely fond of salad, I remember; and I very proud of my mustard and cress—which I could gather for him myself with one of my own table-knives. So copiously he talked, with such a medley of joys and zests and surprises on his face, that I vowed soon to be mistress of my stepmother tongue. He could also conjure away reels and thimbles, even spoons and forks, with a skill that precluded my becoming a materialist for ever after. I *worshipped* my grandfather—and yet without a vestige of fear.

To him indeed—though I think he was himself of a secular turn of mind—I owe the story of my birthday saint, St. Rosa of Lima in Peru, the only saint, I believe, of the New World.

With myself pinnacled on his angular knee, and devouring like a sweetmeat every broken English word as it slipped from his tongue, he told me how pious an *enfant* my Saint had been; how, when her mother, to beautify her, had twined flowers in her hair, she had pinned them to her skull; how she had rubbed quicklime on her fair cheeks to disenchant her lovers (*ses prétendants*) and how it was only veritable showers of roses from heaven that had at last persuaded Pope Clement to make her a saint.

"Perhaps, *bon papa*," said I, "I shall dig and sow too when I am grown up, like St. Rosa, to support *my* mama and papa when *they* are very old. Do you think I shall make enough money? Papa has a very good appetite." He stared at me, as if in consternation.

"*Dieu vous en garde, ma p'tite*," he cried; and violently blew his nose.

So closely I took St. Rosa's story to heart that, one day, after bidding my beauty a wistful farewell in the glass, I rubbed my cheek too, but with the blue flowers of the—brooklime. It stained them a little, but soon washed off. In my case a needless precaution; my *prétendants* have been few.

It was a mournful day when my grandfather returned to France never to be seen by me again. Yet he was to remember me always; and at last when I myself had forgotten even my faith in his fidelity. Nearly all my personal furnishings and belongings were gifts of his from France, and many of them of his own making. There was my four-post bed, for instance; with a flowered silk canopy, a carved tester and half a dozen changes of linen and valance. There were chairs to match, a wardrobe, silk mats from Persia, a cheval glass, and clothes and finery in abundance, china and cutlery, top-boots and sabots. Even a silver-hooped bath-tub and a crystal toilet set, and scores of articles besides for use or ornament, which it would be tedious to mention. My grandfather had my measurements to a nicety, and as the years went by he sagaciously allowed for growth.

I learned to tell the time from an eight-day clock which

played a sacred tune at matins and vespers; and later, he sent me a watch, the least bit too large for me to be quite comfortable but an exquisite piece of workmanship. As my birthdays (and his) drew near, I could scarcely sleep for thinking what fresh entrancing novelty the festive morning would bring. The only one of his gifts—by no means the least ingenious—which never after the first flush of excitement, gave me much pleasure, was a two-chambered thatched summer-house, set upon a pole, and reached by a wide, shallow ladder. The roof opened, so that on very hot days a block of ice could be laid within, the water from its slow melting running out by a gutter. But I loved sunshine. This was a plaything that ridiculously amused chance visitors; it attracted flies; I felt silly up in it; and gladly resigned it to the tits, starlings, and sparrows to quarrel over as they pleased.

My really useful furniture—of plain old Sheraton design, was set out in my bedroom. In one half of the room slept Pollie, a placid, but before her marriage, rather slow-witted creature, about six years my senior. The other half was mine and had been made proportionate to my needs by a cabinet-maker from London. My father had had a low stone balcony built on beyond my window. This was fenced with fine trellis work to screen it from the colder winds. With its few extremely dwarf trees set along in green Nankin tubs, and the view it commanded, I could enjoy this eyrie for hours—never wearied of it in my youth, nor shall if I live to be a hundred.

I linger over these early recollections, simply because they are such very happy things to possess. And now for out-of-doors.

Either because my mother was shy of me, or because she thought vulgar attention would be bad for me, she seldom took me far abroad. Now and then Pollie carried me down to the village to tea with her mother, and once or twice I was taken to church. The last occasion, however, narrowly escaped being a catastrophe, and the experiment was not repeated. Instead, we usually held a short evening service, on Sundays, in the house, when my father read the lessons, "like a miner prophet," as I wrote and told Miss Fenne. He certainly dug away at the texts

till the words glittered for me like lumps of coal. On week-days more people were likely to be about, and in general I was secluded. A mistake, I think. But fortunately our high, plain house stood up in a delightful garden, sloping this way and that towards orchard and wood, with a fine-turfed lawn, few "cultivated" flowers, and ample drifts of shade. If Kent is the garden of England, then this was the garden of Kent.

I was forbidden to be alone in it. But Pollie would sometimes weary of her charge (in which I encouraged her) and when out of sight of the windows she would stray off to gossip with the gardener or with some friend from the village, leaving me to myself. To judge from the tales which I have read or have been told about children, I must have been old for my age. But perhaps the workings of the mind and heart of a girl in her teens are not of general interest. Let me be brief. A stream of water ran on the southern side all the length of the garden, under a high rocky bank (its boundary) which was densely overhung with ash and willow, and hedges of brier and bramble looped with bindweed, goose-grass, and traveller's joy. On the nearer bank of this stream which had been left to its wild, I would sit among the mossy rocks and stones and search the green tops of my ambush as if in quest of Paradise.

When the sun's rays beat down too fiercely on my head I would make myself an umbrella of wild angelica or water parsnip.

Caring little for playthings, and having my smallest books with me chiefly for silent company, I would fall into a daydream in a world that in my solitude became my own. In this fantastic and still world I forgot the misadventure of my birth, which had now really begun to burden me, forgot pride, vanity, and chagrin; and was at peace. There I had many proportionate friends, few enemies. An old carrion crow, that sulked out a black existence in this beauty, now and then alarmed me with his attentions; but he was easily scared off. The lesser and least of living things seemed to accept me as one of themselves. Nor (perhaps because I never killed them) had I any silly distaste

for the caterpillars, centipedes, and satiny black slugs. Mistress Snail would stoop out at me like a foster-mother. Even the midges, which to his frenzy would swarm round my father's head like swifts round a steeple, left me entirely unmolested. Either I was too dry a prey, or they misliked the flavour of my blood.

My eyes dazzled in colours. The smallest of the marvels of flowers and flies and beetles and pebbles, and the radiance that washed over them, would fill me with a mute, pent-up rapture almost unendurable. Butterflies would settle quietly on the hot stones beside me as if to match their raiment against mine. If I proffered my hand, with quivering wings and horns they would uncoil their delicate tongues and quaff from it drops of dew or water. A solemn grasshopper would occasionally straddle across my palm, and with patience I made quite an old friend of a harvest mouse. They weigh only two to the half-penny. This sharp-nosed furry morsel would creep swiftly along to share my crumbs and snuggle itself to sleep in my lap. By-and-by, I suppose, it took to itself a wife; I saw it no more. Bees would rest there, the panniers of their thighs laden with pollen: and now and then a wasp, his jaws full of wood or meat. When sun-beetles or ants drew near, they would seem to pause at my whisper, as if hearkening. As if in their remote silence pondering and sharing the world with me. All childish fancy, no doubt; for I proved far less successful with the humans.

But how, it may be asked, seeing that there must have been a shrill piping of birds and brawling of water among the stones, how could Mademoiselle's delicate ear endure *that* racket? Perhaps it is because the birds being loose in the hollow of space, it carried away into its vacancy their cries. It is, too, the harsh, rather than the shrill, that frets me. As for the noise of the water, it was so full and limpid, yet made up of such infinitely entangled chimings and drummings, that it would lull me into a kind of trance, until to a strange eye I must have appeared like a lifeless waxen mammet on my stone.

What may wholly have been another childish fancy was that

apart from the silvery darting flies and the rainbow-coloured motes in the sunbeams, fine and airy invisible shapes seemed to haunt and hover around me when all was still. Most of my fellow creatures to my young nose had an odour a good deal denser than the fainter scented flowers, and I can fancy such a fog, if intensified, would be distressing to beings so bodiless and rare. Whereas the air I disturbed and infected with my presence can have been but shallow volume.

Fairies I never saw—I had a kind of fear and distaste for them even in books. Nor for that matter—perhaps because the stream here was too tumbling and opaque—a kingfisher. But whatever other company may have been mine, I had the clouds and the water and the insects and the stones—while pimpernel, mousetail, tormentil, the wild strawberry, the feathery grasses seemed to have been made expressly for my delight. Egocentric Midget that I was!

ELINOR WYLIE

Poet, novelist

The late Mrs. Wylie's novels are almost as poetic as her poetry. Their essence is fantastic and whimsical imaginings tempered with gentle irony. Who but a poet would have written a novel about a delicate hero made of Venetian spun glass? Or who but a person of sensitive imagination would have conceived the fantastic idea that Shelley, the orphan angel, did not die but came on a ship to America?

A study of Mrs. Wylie's character and habits as an author has been written by Mr. Carl Van Doren, and will be found in this text.

There was once an apocryphal German professor who proposed an amended version of certain lines from *As You Like It.* Shakespeare, he suggested, had drunk rather too much canary or Rhenish when he wrote, "Sermons in stones, books in the running brooks." It should obviously, said the Herr Professor, be reversed; sermons belonged in books and stones were frequently found in brooks. And this is true enough, as any mere clergyman or geologist can affirm, and yet it is not half so true as the thing Shakespeare said.

In another book, even greater than *As You Like it*, there is a prolonged and consistent use of parables. When, in the 80th Psalm, the history of Israel is compared to the growth of a vine, the device of metaphor is magnificently successful. If you dislike a rich man, and find it hard to

believe that he will ever go to heaven, you will think of the eye of a needle even quicker than you will think of Dives. The Unwise Virgin is so present an image in everyone's mind that it is possible today to call a play *Behold the Bridegroom* and make your meaning plain to the population of Broadway.

Therefore I do not, in this paper, intend to apologize for allegories. I believe that no single person who reads my words has not accepted allegories as the very essence of truth, and grown so familiar with that truth that he has forgotten that they were allegories. It is simply that in the older stories, the ones which have become part not only of our literature but of our lives, the symbol has become a name for the thing itself, the mask is immediately recognized. Perhaps it is not accurate nowadays to say that everyone will immediately recognize Punch and Judy as a wife-beater and a shrew, but certainly everyone will recognize Charlie Chaplin as a tragic clown and Mary Pickford as a good little girl. If the most literal-minded person among us wishes to describe a man whose generosity passes the bounds of worldy wisdom, he will not cast his mind's eye up and down Main Street for a comparison; he will say that the man is quixotic, and all his literal and realistic friends will accept the word as descriptive. In every circus traveling over the dusty length and breadth of the American summer, the dwarfs will be called Lilliputians, and all the little children will understand quite well that they are not giants. It is too much to expect of the average person to remember that these words came from the bitter and brilliant allegories of Cervantes and Swift, but I ask the readers of this paper to remember it, and to marvel at the lasting power of the symbolical in art.

I wish to avoid the word "fantasy"; it reminds too many people of Dr. Freud of Vienna, and it reminds me of those blithe patterns upon printed silks which the French call *fantaisie*. It is not a word of sufficient dignity and worth to describe *The Faerie Queene*, or *Pilgrim's Progress*, or *Gulliver's Travels*. I myself should hesitate to apply it to *Lady into Fox;* certainly it is not a noble enough name for *Mr. Weston's Good Wine*. These things are all allegories, of less or greater merit and grandeur; some are slight, and some are heroic, but they are all too good to be called fantasies.

Now the literal-minded may ask—or so I am credibly informed—why Mr. Bunyan did not tell the realistic story of a persecuted dissenter, and why Mr. Powys did not tell the naturalistic tale of an English village. But for some unknown reason he will ask this question more indignantly in the case of Mr. Powys than in the case of Mr. Bunyan, for to many people it seems forgivable to be allegorical in the seventeenth century and excessively foolish to be allegorical in the twentieth. I think, although it is impossible to be sure about anything so mysterious as this theory, that the explanation is quite simple; to the literal-minded, Mr. Bunyan's real history is very nearly as fantastic as the story of Christian's pilgrimage, and the steel helmet of the Parliamentary soldier as strange as Christian's staff and scrip. Whereas Mr. Powys lives today, and recognizes the existence of Fords and the Woolworth Stores, and these things should disinfect a man's imagination against all danger of visions. Only, thank God, they don't, and if you stop to think of it, Mr. Bunyan's flintlock probably seemed as prosaic and modern to him as Mr. Powy's umbrella undoubtedly seems to Mr. Powys. In the same way, Mr. Literal-Minded really sees very

little difference between the court of Queen Anne and the court of Brobdignag, and he thinks the Reverend Dean Swift quite justified in being savage and insanely fanciful about politics and morals. He wishes, however—or so I am credibly informed—that modern writers would be sensibly modern, and stick to their Gopher Prairies and their American Tragedies.

Now as a matter of cold fact, both Mr. Lewis's books and the even more amazing books of Mr. Dreiser are full of allegorical figures. Over the books of Mr. Dreiser there broods a terrific figure of blind and tragic Chance, blinder by far than Mr. Hardy's Chance, who did after all in the final analysis belong to the Church of England. Mr. Dreiser's Chance is a sort of Cyclops with his eye put out; he frightens Mr. Dreiser more than the Cyclops ever frightened Ulysses. As for Mr. Lewis, his Babbitt is one of the lesser gods of the American mythology; he is a mere metaphor. He is really no more realistic than Gargantua, though he is not nearly so lovable.

I admit, however, that these gentlemen are not meaning to write allegories. They are doing it in spite of themselves, and against all their principles and convictions. Among those who are speaking in parables and violating no principles in so doing, the most distinguished examples are Mr. T. F. Powys, Mr. David Garnett, and Miss Sylvia Townsend Warner. In the books of these three English writers, the events of the story are sometimes supernatural; the forces of the universe of good and evil, the common courses of nature are changed and twisted into miracles and portents. The same thing happens in any fairy story; it happens in Cinderella and in Little Red Riding Hood. But this is no reason for laughing at these books, or for stupidly wondering; the same thing happens

in Homer's *Odyssey* and in *Hamlet*. There is even an element of the supernatural in the Bible, and the best critics do not hold that the power and majesty of that book is lessened thereby.

Another and less clearly defined form of allegory is that in which the story is possible, but frankly improbable and strange. In this class belong many books of adventure; whether the writer knew it or not, I believe that a writer has seldom assumed a toga or a periwig save as a mask or disguise for his deeper meaning. I am not, of course, speaking of the ruck of historical novels, but I think I see Mr. Thackeray's blacker moods dressed up as Esmond, and Stevenson happily escaping with Jim Hawkins. Into this class I put my own books, with the single exception of the *Venetian Glass Nephew*, which contains a light hint of the supernatural, perfectly susceptible of being explained away by the sober-minded.

Now why should anyone wish to wear a pair of wings or a periwig, and pretend to be an angel or a *chevalier d'industrie*? The answer is somewhat complicated, but nowhere has it been more happily expressed than in a short essay by Mr. Christopher Morley, dealing with a brief allegorical novel of several years ago which Mr. Morley was kind enough to admire. I will quote his opening paragraphs:

> There are always excellent reasons for silence. One worthy reason is that you have nothing to say. Another is that what you are thinking is too important to be said, or would become untrue if uttered. The recourse of those who feel that they have something to say, but desire to avoid the bitterness of being understood, has been (ever since Æsop) the fable or fantasy. The importance of any fable can be gauged by the area of silence it covers. Abraham Lincoln, a very Æsopian person, could conceal the whole blackness of Civil War in an anecdote.

That is excellent and exact. "To avoid the bitterness of being understood"—that holds good for the mighty Swift,

although it was written about one of the least of the allegorists of this generation. And to avoid the bitterness of understanding; sometimes it is that. And to be able to put a red beard or a lion's skin on your worst enemy, or to seize a rapier or an old-fashioned squirrel rifle, and have at them without explanation or apology. If Swift had written about the king's mistresses he would have been imprisoned, but by calling them cushions he could be as bitter as he pleased, or very nearly, for nobody was ever so bitter as the Dean pleased. If you call a spade a diamond some people will think you are frivolous and affected, but other people will understand how much blacker things may be said about spades by the simple trick of pretending that they are diamonds.

—Elinor Wylie, "Symbols in Literature." [1]

[1] Supplied from *The English Journal* of June, 1928, by the courtesy of William Rose Benét.

OF SAPPHO LITTLE, BUT ALL ROSES [1]

In Angelo Querini's classical garden at Altichieri there stood a summer-house dedicated to the goddess of Folly; this charming structure was, paradoxically enough, presided over by a bust of Marcus Aurelius and decorated with a motto from Montaigne. A more apposite taste had graced the dovecote with a Grecian Venus, and raised an altar to the spirit of tranquillity in the midst of abundances of sweet basil, lavender, and thyme.

Midway between an Egyptian sarcophagus and an Etruscan monument, both heavily overgrown with deep viridian moss, a marble bench disclosed its rosy veining to the September sun, and seemed to invite a languorous repose in keeping with the season. From the door of the shadowed summer-house a young girl presently emerged; her lively glance surveyed the autumnal lawns and arbours, and instantly selected the carved and coral-coloured seat as most benignant to her mood. She carried an armful of books; these she disposed within reach, herself reclining in the sunnier corner of the bench. She was soft and inscrutable as a Persian kitten.

A black kitten among the bright and gilded trees, with hazel eyes transfused with gold, and hair so dark that only at the temples a darkening golden tinge survived in smoky black. Her dress was black as soot; such a dress, decent, and austere, as clothed Querini's admired and admirable young friend Fulvia Vivaldi in her Genevan retreat; too black, in spite of the clear muslin kerchief and the silver chain, for Rosalba Berni on her eighteenth birthday.

[1] Reprinted from *The Venetian Glass Nephew* by Elinor Wylie, by and with permission of and special arrangement with Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., authorized publishers.

This was, then, the celebrated Rosalba, better known among the Arcadians of Italy as Sappho the Younger, or to the more affectionate few, the Infant Sappho. This child was an orphan by report, and by profoundly proven faith the ward and adoptive daughter of the noble and liberal Angelo Querini, ex-senator of the Venetian patriciate and valued comrade of Voltaire. It was openly declared that she was a descendant of Francesco Berni the poet, to whose sparkling blood she owed her marvellous wit and the inventive lightness of her mind; other more insinuating murmurs attributed these qualities to an equally effervescent source: the whispered name of the Cardinal de Bernis was a veritable Arcadian diploma of mental grace, and Rosalba's eyebrows were distinctly French.

She had these brows, arched forever in a delicate amazement, drawn upon a smooth forehead; her dark hair grew in a point; and her eyes were large between black lashes; their expression was calm, but impertinent. Her mouth was curled like a scarlet petal in some early frost of irony; her skin was white as the rose of her baptismal name. Across her slightly tilted nose a score of golden freckles made her human; for the rest, in form and elegance of gesture, she was Artemis.

Yet not the Artemis of ivory or of quarried stone, however exquisite. Rosalba was more vital than opening roses or ripened fruit; she lived and moved and burned within the chilly greenery with a palpable warmth; she was a flame whose consummation may be bitter, but whose promissory blooming is tenderer than apple blossoms. To the five senses of an observer she was indeed imagined flowers to breathe, as she must have been velvet to touch, cream to taste, the crescent moon to gaze upon, and, to the listening ear, a melody repeated by a mocking-bird.

It was all to the credit of M. de Chastelneuf that the five senses of this particular observer were so poetically acute; the young Virginio leaned upon a mossy column, while love for Rosalba Berni whirled over him like a fragrant wave, and left him drowned in those same waters from which the mother of such love arose.

"'O bianca Galatea!'" said Virginio, politely, quoting Metastasio.

"My name is Sappho," Rosalba replied rather crossly. "I do not care for Italian verse; I prefer the classics, and, above all, Ossian. I am at present busy, very busy, with a translation of the latter, for the benefit of those unfortunate people who are unable to read it in the original Gaelic."

"Is it not written in English?" Virginio inquired timidly. "And have I not heard that Signor Cesarotti—"

"Be silent, if you cannot converse intelligently."

Rosalba pronounced these words with perfect calm; she was imperial rather than rude.

"Precisely," Virginio returned, with a gentle smile; she was suddenly aware that he was far more beautiful than any Adonis in Querini's garden. He reminded her of marble. Or was it marble of which he reminded her? Something more translucent; crystal, perhaps.

"I am reading, as you see," she said more kindly, "but I can spare you a few moments; I dare say you would like me to show you the books I have this very morning received from my kind friend and guardian. Approach, young sir; the gate is unlocked, and if you will wear white shoes, you must expect the dew to spoil them."

Virginio drew near her as one who visits, in simple reverence and awe, the shrine of an immortal; she laughed, and made a place for him beside her on the bench, among the richly bound volumes which surrounded her.

"Here, my poor boy, are the 'Confessions' of Rousseau; I suppose you have never read them. For my part, I have been familiar with their pages for years; this rose-coloured levant is merely a new dress for an old and adored companion. Here, is the 'Cecilia' of Signorina Burney, published this same year in London; it will be so much Greek to you. Here is some real Greek; a manuscript copy of the Codex Palatinus, or Anthology of Cephalas; the original is unfortunately locked up in the Vatican library."

"Where could it be safer, or in the company of so many equally holy treasures?" asked Virginio in mild surprise, which turned to actual terror as Rosalba whirled upon him with the silken savagery of a little panther. It was now evident that, whoever her father, her mother must have been Italian.

"Are you a victim of superstition, and dare to enter these sacred shades?" she cried in honest indignation. Her eyes were burning amber, and the crisp tendrils of her hair appeared disturbed and shaken. Virginio trembled; a faint cracking sensation menaced his expanded heart.

"I am a Christian," he contrived to enunciate; he was very pale, and looked more than ever transparent. Rosalba was touched in spite of her convictions.

"Do not be distressed; I am myself a deist," she cried generously. Virginio put his cold hand over his sea-blue eyes; bright glassy tears fell into the air, and lay like silver on the yellow linden tassels at Rosalba's feet. "My poor boy, we have all made mistakes," she told him, seriously; she found his emotion curiously disturbing. "Look, I am often very silly myself; I have wasted half my birthday morning in re-reading a peculiarly childish novel by Carlo Gozzi. I am ashamed to admit that his fairy-stories have always had an attraction for my mind. Listen; it was this that I found so absorbing, this nonsense." And she proceeded to read the following passage from a shabby little book bound in coloured paper, and furnished with a marker of green silk ribbon.

" 'A lady, adorned in the Venetian fashion, with a Florentine petticoat, and a blue satin vest, apparently fresh from the mercer's, trimmed with sleeves of the finest lace; she wore rings and bracelets of the richest gold, and a necklace set with Indian diamonds.' "

JAMES BRANCH CABELL

Novelist

What Mr. Mencken does in the essay and Mr. Lewis in the realistic novel, Mr. Cabell does in his imaginative fiction. Thereby it loses in harshness and gains in subtlety. He criticizes this complacent world of ours, but with humor—in fact, with a good deal of glee. "What he tries to do," says Mr. Mencken, "is to construct a world that shall be better than the world of everyday. He does not denounce his fellow-men for being satisfied with that everyday world, and he does not urge them to improve it; he simply invites them to take a ride with him and enjoy the lovelier scenery that he has discovered."

Mr. Cabell does not "moil over" his style because he does not need to.

"First, as to what I consider my best writing. I have upon this point absolutely no conviction, nor, indeed, any strong preference. . . . I would not recommend to students, or to anybody, to read any specific author: here it is happily ordained that you must, and will, find for yourself what you honestly enjoy. . . . And, lastly, I do not know of any reason for moiling over your own 'style' except that you may chance to enjoy this form of solitaire: for the benefit to be derived by any reader from careful writing—unless, to be sure, he reads for the benefit of his personal 'style'—remains remarkably dubious."

—James Branch Cabell.

HOW MANUEL LEFT THE MIRE [1]

They of Poictesme narrate that in the old days when miracles were as common as fruit pies, young Manuel was a swineherd, living modestly in attendance upon the miller's pigs. They tell also that Manuel was content enough: he knew not of the fate which was reserved for him.

Meanwhile in all the environs of Rathgor, and in the thatched villages of Lower Targamon, he was well liked: and when the young people gathered in the evening to drink brandy and eat nuts and ginger-bread, nobody danced more merrily than Squinting Manuel. He had a quiet way with the girls, and with the men a way of solemn, blinking simplicity which caused the more hasty in judgment to consider him a fool. Then, too, young Manuel was very often detected smiling sleepily over nothing, and his gravest care in life appeared to be that figure which Manuel had made out of marsh clay from the pool of Haranton.

This figure he was continually reshaping and realtering. The figure stood upon the margin of the pool; and near by were two stones overgrown with moss, and supporting a cross of old worm-eaten wood, which commemorated what had been done there.

One day, toward autumn, as Manuel was sitting in this place, and looking into the deep still water, a stranger came, and he wore a fierce long sword that interfered deplorably with his walking.

"Now I wonder what it is you find in that dark pool to keep you staring so?" the stranger asked, first of all.

"I do not very certainly know," replied Manuel, "but mistily I seem to see drowned there the loves and the desires and the

[1] From *Figures of Earth.* Reprinted by permission of Robert M. McBride and Company, publishers.

adventures I had when I wore another body than this. For the water of Haranton, I must tell you, is not like the water of other fountains, and curious dreams engender in this pool."

"I speak no ill against oneirology, although broad noon is hardly the best time for its practise," declared the snub-nosed stranger. "But what is that thing?" he asked, pointing.

"It is the figure of a man, which I have modeled and remodeled, sir, but cannot seem to get exactly to my liking. So it is necessary that I keep laboring at it until the figure is to my thinking and my desire."

"But, Manuel, what need is there for you to model it at all?"

"Because my mother, sir, was always very anxious for me to make a figure in the world, and when she lay a-dying I promised her that I would do so, and then she put a geas upon me to do it."

"Ah, to be sure! but are you certain it was this kind of figure she meant?"

"Yes, for I have often heard her say that, when I grew up, she wanted me to make myself a splendid and admirable young man in every respect. So it is necessary that I make the figure of a young man, for my mother was not of these parts, but a woman of Ath Cliath, and so she put a geas upon me—"

"Yes, yes, you had mentioned this geas, and I am wondering what sort of a something is this geas."

"It is what you might call a bond or an obligation, sir, only it is of the particularly strong and unreasonable and secret sort which the Firbolg use."

The stranger now looked from the figure to Manuel, and the stranger deliberated the question (which later was to puzzle so many people) if any human being could be as simple as Manuel appeared. Manuel at twenty was not yet the burly giant he became. But already he was a gigantic and florid person, so tall that the heads of few men reached to his shoulder; a person of handsome exterior, high featured and blond, having a narrow small head, and vivid light blue eyes, and the chest of a stallion; a person whose left eyebrow had an odd oblique droop, so that the stupendous boy

at his simplest appeared to be winking the information that he was in jest.

All in all, the stranger found this young swineherd ambiguous; and there was another curious thing too which the stranger noticed about Manuel.

"Is it on account of this geas," asked the stranger, "that a great lock has been sheared away from your yellow hair?"

In an instant Manuel's face became dark and wary. "No," he said, "that has nothing to do with my geas, and we must not talk about that."

"Now you are a queer lad to be having such an obligation upon your head, and to be having well-nigh half the hair cut away from your head, and to be having inside your head such notions. And while small harm has ever come from humoring one's mother, yet I wonder at you, Manuel, that you should sit here sleeping in the sunlight among your pigs, and be giving your young time to improbable sculpture and stagnant water, when there is such a fine adventure awaiting you, and when the Norns are foretelling such high things about you as they spin the thread of your living."

"Hah, glory be to God, friend, but what is this adventure?"

"The adventure is that the Count of Arnaye's daughter yonder has been carried off by a wizard, and that the high Count Demetrios offers much wealth and broad lands, and his daughter's hand in marriage too, to the lad that will fetch back this lovely girl."

"I have heard talk of this in the kitchen of Arnaye, where I sometimes sell them a pig. But what are such matters to a swineherd?"

"My lad, you are to-day a swineherd drowsing in the sun, as yesterday you were a baby squalling in the cradle, but to-morrow you will be neither of these if there be any truth whatever in the talking of the Norns as they gossip at the foot of their ash-tree."

Manuel appeared to accept the inevitable. He bowed his brightly colored high head, saying gravely: "All honor be to Urdhr and Verdandi and Skuld! If I am decreed to be the

champion that is to rescue the Count of Arnaye's daughter, it is ill arguing with the Norns. Come, tell me now, how do you call this doomed wizard, and how does one get to him to sever his wicked head from his foul body?"

"Men speak of him as Miramon Lluagor, lord of the nine kinds of sleep and prince of the seven madnesses. He lives in mythic splendor at the top of the gray mountain called Vraidex, where he contrives all manner of illusions, and, in particular, designs the dreams of men."

"Yes, in the kitchen of Arnaye, also, such was the report concerning this Miramon: and not a person in the kitchen denied that this Miramon is an ugly customer."

"He is the most subtle of wizards. None can withstand him, and nobody can pass the terrible serpentine designs which Miramon has set to guard the gray scarps of Vraidex unless one carries the more terrible sword Flamberge, which I have here in its blue scabbard."

"Why, then, it is you who must rescue the Count's daughter!"

"No, that would not do at all: for there is in the life of a champion too much of turmoil and of buffetings and murderings to suit me, who am a peace-loving person. Besides, to the champion who rescues the Lady Giséle will be given her hand in marriage, and as I have a wife, I know that to have two wives would lead to twice too much dissension to suit me, who am a peace-loving person. So I think it is you who had better take the sword and the adventure."

"Well," Manuel said, "much wealth and broad lands and a lovely wife are finer things to ward than a parcel of pigs."

So Manuel girded on the charmed scabbard, and with the charmed sword he sadly demolished the clay figure he could not get quite right. Then Manuel sheathed Flamberge, and Manuel cried farewell to the pigs.

"I shall not ever return to you, my pigs, because, at worst, to die valorously is better than to sleep out one's youth in the sun. A man has but one life. It is his all. Therefore I now depart from you, my pigs, to win me a fine wife and much wealth and

leisure wherein to discharge my geas. And when my geas is lifted I shall not come back to you, my pigs, but I shall travel everywhither, and into the last limits of earth, so that I may see the ends of this world and may judge them while my life endures. For after that, they say, I judge not, but am judged: and a man whose life has gone out of him, my pigs, is not even good bacon."

"So much rhetoric for the pigs," says the stranger, "is well enough, and likely to please them. But come, is there not some girl or another to whom you should be saying good-bye with other things than words?"

"No, at first I thought I would also bid farewell to Suskind, who is sometimes friendly with me in the twilight wood, but upon reflection it seems better not to. For Suskind would probably weep, and exact promises of eternal fidelity, and otherwise dampen the ardor with which I look toward to-morrow and the winning of the wealthy Count of Arnaye's lovely daughter."

"Now, to be sure, you are a queer cool candid fellow, you young Manuel, who will go far, whether for good or evil!"

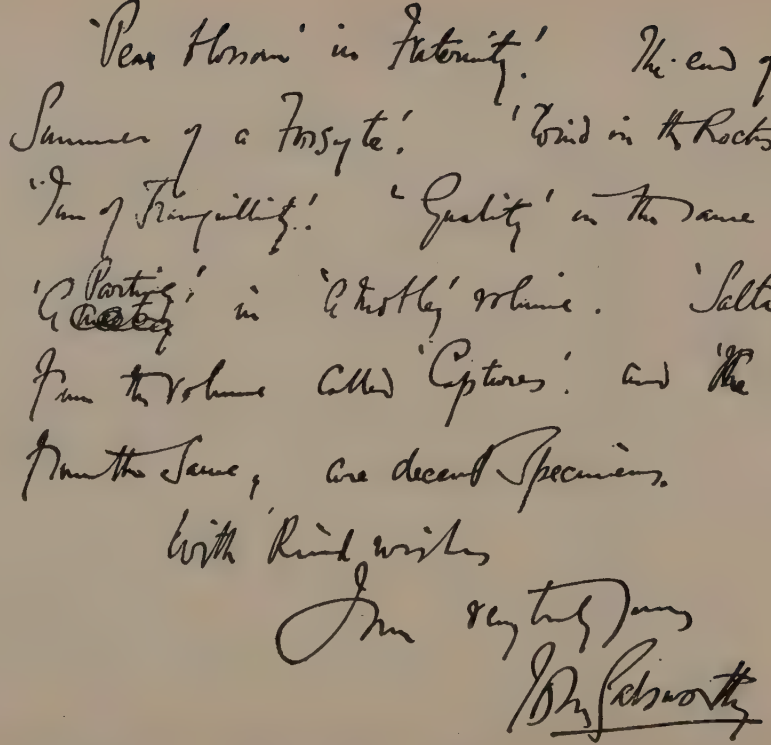
"I do not know about good or evil. But I am Manuel, and I shall follow after my own thinking and my own desires."

"And certainly it is no less queer you should be saying that: for, as everybody knows, it used to be the favorite byword of your namesake the famous Count Manuel that is so newly dead in the South yonder."

At that the young swineherd nodded gravely. "I must accept the omen, sir. For, as I interpret it, my great namesake has courteously made way for me, in order that I may go far beyond him."

Then Manuel cried farewell and thanks to the mild-mannered, snub-nosed stranger, and Manuel left the miller's pigs to their own devices by the pool of Haranton, and Manuel marched away in his rags to meet a fate that was long talked about.

AMONG EMINENT NOVELISTS



Facsimile of part of the letter from John Galsworthy to the author printed on the following pages.

JOHN GALSWORTHY

Essayist, dramatist, novelist

No one can speak with greater knowledge than Mr. Galsworthy on the art of expression. No living author writes with more care of the lives and habits of his characters. In spite of the length of his novels, they impress one with their clarity and brevity of expression.

Nearly all biographies or sketches of Mr. Galsworthy include the information that he was born of an old Devonshire family, was educated at Oxford, was admitted to the bar but did not practice long, and that he now leads the life of an English country gentleman on the edge of Dartmoor. All of this is significant for two reasons: in the first place, Mr. Galsworthy represents to the English and American mind the ideal of the English country gentleman; in the second place, he has the leisure to write. A great many potentially good writers are failures although they may produce best sellers. For good reasons or bad, they have not the time, or do not take it, to write carefully. Because Mr. Galsworthy has the time and takes it, his novels resemble in careful workmanship some of the old masters.

Mr. Galsworthy's letter is as follows:

"My address in 1926 to the English Association will give you far better than a letter some of my feelings on the subject of the English language.

"You ask what I think specimens of my best writing. Perhaps: The orchard chapter in *The Apple Tree;* the chapter describing the river after sunset in 'Summer' out

of *The Dark Flower*. The last chapter of *The Man of Property*. The little chapter called 'Pear Blossom' in *Fraternity*. The end of *Indian Summer of a Forsyte*. 'Wind in the Rocks' from the *Inn of Tranquillity*. 'Quality' in the same volume. 'A Parting' in *A Motley* volume. 'Salta pro Nobis' from the volume called *Captures*, and 'The Broken Boot' from the same, are decent specimens."

—JOHN GALSWORTHY.

ON EXPRESSION [1]

Expression is my subject; and no mariner embarking on the endless waters of the Atlantic in a Canadian canoe could feel more lost than the speaker who ventures on a theme so wide and inexhaustible. And yet—how pleasant to know that it doesn't matter how one steers; for in no case can one arrive! The barque of my discourse must needs be lifted every which way, veer helplessly in the winds and cross-currents of the measureless, and trace a crazy line.

Let me hazard, however, a prefatory axiom, about expression as a whole: The soul of good expression is an unexpectedness, which, still, keeps to the mark of meaning, and does not betray truth. Fresh angles, new lights; but neither at the expense of significance, nor to the detriment of verity; never, in fact, just for the sake of being unexpected. Perchance, throughout this discourse you will remember that pet conviction of the speaker.

Following first the incorrigible bent of a novelist, let me proffer a speculation or two on the connexion between expression and character-drawing. Hardly any figures in prose fiction seem to survive the rust of Time unless burnished by happy extravagance, saved by a tinge of irony, or inhabited by what one may call "familiar spirit." The creations of such writers as Rabelais, Cervantes, Dumas, and Dickens may serve to illustrate survival through happy extravagance; of Fielding, Jane Austen, Thackeray, and Anatole France through ironical tincture; of Tolstoy through "familiar spirit."

We all understand happy extravagance, however incapable of it we may be; nor do we find any great difficulty in appreciat-

[1] Presidentjal Address to the English Association, 1924. Reprinted by permission of the author.

ing the preservative qualities of an ironic humour, which is very much a part of English character. I need not, then, dwell on expression in regard to these. "Familiar spirit" is a more mysterious affair. The characters in fictions who are inhabited by "familiar spirit" are such as convince the reader that he might meet and recognize them walking the every-day world. Mr. Hardy's Tess, Mr. Moore's Esther, Mr. Bennett's Elsie of *Riceyman Steps*, and Mr. Well's Kipps are good English specimens of characters so endowed. But one may gather more easily from Tolstoy's creations in *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* than from any English examples, the nature of this quality. It demands an unselfconsciousness rare in English and French novelists—perfectly simple expression, without trick, manner, or suspicion of desire to seem clever, modern, æsthetic. Tolstoy was lost in the creative mood when he made "Natasha," "Pierre," and "Anna."

"Familiar spirit," however, may inhabit a whole book and ensure its permanence, although that book contains no characters who remain in the mind: *Cranford*, *The Golden Age*, *The Purple Land*, occur to me as instances. And probably the perfect example of familiar spirit permeating both book and its characters is Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*—that joyous work as sure of immortality as any book I know. While on the question of resistance to Time, we ought, I suppose, to be wondering how much longer bulk is going to count in the equation of survival. Life driven by inventions from pillar to post has ever less time in its bank for us to draw on. But the persistent popularity of *Don Quixote*, *Tom Jones*, *David Copperfield*, *War and Peace*, and other very long masterpieces seems to contradict the logical suspicion that economy of expression must favour durability. The contemporary novel, at all events, shows little sign of shrinkage. Expression seems rather to be taking the bit between its teeth, and galloping on the road. Ours is an experimental epoch. New doctrines obtain. It has become, for instance, something of a fashion to feel that under the fevering influence of emotional stress we are all alike. Hero—they say—differs

little from hero, when both are in pursuit of heroines. Villains have much in common, and are readily nosed in the lobby. Passion, in sum, is a leveller. Hence, the novelists' itch to express character without rise or fall in blood pressure—to bring out the individuality of the hero by subtle pictures of him changing his socks or putting in his clutch; of the heroine, by refining on her as she applies her lip-stick, pours in her bath-salts, or leans out of the window into the summer night.

This undramatic mode has its drawbacks, and, so far perhaps, only two writers, neither of whom ever wrote a novel, have succeeded in using it to perfection—the Russian Tchekhov, and the English Katherine Mansfield. Their stories have a real past-mastership of every-day moments, of significant insignificances, and of differentiation through little in-between events. But by both of them this in-between method of expression was instinctively, I think, rather than self-consciously, adopted. It may be doubted whether they knew quite what they were aiming at—though certain words in Katherine Mansfield's diary show that she was approaching that knowledge when—alas—she passed from the world she loved and studied.

Among the experimentalists in expression, we cannot avoid noting, also, the psycho-analyst with his, or generally her, love of the worm in the bud, and prepossession with the past; an industrious and interesting method presided over by conscience in azure stockings, and a handkerchief slightly scented with iodoform. These and other experimentalists have no doubt made an arrangement with Time to pass them through the Customs. But will they all escape confiscation? I quote a couple of paragraphs chosen at random from the work of a transatlantic writer, because a rising—nay, a risen—compatriot has termed her the most important pioneer in the field of Letters in his time:

When she was quite a young one she knew she had been in a family living and that that family living was one that any one could be one not have been having if they were to be one being one not thinking about being one having been having family living.

And this:

> All there is of more chances is in a book, all there is of any more chances is in a list, all there is of chances is in an address, all there is is what is the best place not to remain sitting and suggesting that there is no title for relieving rising.

All modern writing, we are told by her compatriot, has sprung from experiments like these. Let me, however, read you a sentence written within twelve months by a writer, not ancient, who veils himself under the initials Y. Y.:

> Hence I shall do my best to go on thinking well of hermit crabs. They are toys—grotesques that might be fitted into a fairy's thimble—as they traffic hither and thither with their borrowed houses on their backs, while the spotted jelly-fishes float above them in their long draperies and indolence.

Dare I profess to you my preference for this, and my doubt whether, modern though it be, it has any relation to those lauded experiments?

These samples, by the way, illustrate conveniently my opening axiom that the soul of good expression is an unexpectedness which still keeps to the mark of meaning, and does not betray truth. "In their long draperies and indolence"—of jelly-fish, how unexpected, and yet how true! But what of unexpectedness lies in those other quotations comes, it would seem, from a sedulous desire to be unexpected and futuristic at all costs.

. . . . . .

Has Shakespeare inspired or discouraged the writer of English? His genius exhausted, as it were, the possibilities of expression. He even gave us our slang. When we say of a bore: "Fire him out!" we do but follow William. And that takes me off at a tangent. The incorporation of slang words—local, professional, even "family" slang words—into the language is, in reason, no bad thing. Slang is, at least, vigorous and apt. Probably most of our vital words were once slang; one by one timidly made sacrosanct in despite of ecclesiastical and other wraths. I am waiting to see the expression "rumty-too" canonized by

Dean Inge, and "gets my goat" academized by Professor Saintsbury.

And, let me say that nothing is more wilting to a writer, attempting to introduce a ewe-lamb of expression, than to receive such a letter as this:

Dear Sir,

I am a great admirer of your work; but will you please tell me what 'daverdy' on page 253 of your last novel means? I cannot find it in the dictionary.

The beauty of a slang word is that you need not put it in the dictionary, it cries its own meaning to its own muffin bell. What an expressive variant of the word "dowdy" (once itself slang) is the word "daverdy"; and what a good instance of word subtlety! Dowdy suggests the flannel petticoat, the thick, the dusty appearance; daverdy a sea-green, trailing, down-at-heeledness.

The mention of slang bends the mind almost insensibly towards the great American language; for some, as you know, have claimed that the Americans already have a language of their own. Let us avoid hyperbole. If Americans, with some exceptions, speak American, they still write English, and generally very good English. Compare the dialogue, for instance, in Sinclair Lewis's delightful *Babbitt*, with the prose that lies in between; or listen to a play by Eugene O'Neill, and then peruse the polished periods of the late President Wilson. Certain Americanisms, too, are but Anglicisms which Time has murdered for us. Take for example the expression: "His first book *in* three years," where we should say: "His first book *for* three years." "I determined not to play again *in* three months" may be met with in the early Jacobean diary of Lady Anne Clifford. Other "Americanisms" are English dialect words almost lost over here; the very common Americanism "dinky" falls from the lips of a Dartmoor farmer—and, aptly enough, he has the name of one of the Pilgrim Fathers.

We English have quite as much divergence between our

spoken and our written language, with this difference perhaps: Americans who talk in jargon, often write good English; but Britons who speak the wondrous treble called cockney, and the blurred ground-bass of the Yorkshire and Lancashire towns, rarely express themselves at all in written words. All this is not by way of looking down the nose at racy jargon. An Arizona friend, describing to me his early riding experiences, culminated thus: "And, by Golly, I rode that son of a gun of a horse behind the saddle to beat the band." How better that in expressing triumph?

. . . . . .

In the course of this digression I have mentioned the ear; and you will perhaps forgive me if I side-slip abruptly to the relative importance of ear and mind in lyric expression.

Take Shakespeare's "Out, out, brief candle!" Why is it charmed? Because of the vowel sounds? Or the dramatic unexpectedness of "brief" applied to "candle"? Or the image of the human spirit burning like a little flame, and blown into nothingness? Because of all three, I think, and in about equal proportions.

Or take Shelley's:

> Mary dear, come to me soon,
> I am not well whilst thou art far;
> As sunset to the sphered moon,
> As twilight to the western star,
> Thou, beloved, art to me.

Again the vowel sounds; the unexpectedness of the word "far"; the imagery; to these must be added the emotion of longing. Wise, by the way, is a lyric poet when his appeal is short. Even Shelley would have been accounted far greater, if he had left behind him a picked tenth of his work. Lyric expression, in fact, can never afford to outrun its own strangeness. The following lines of Masefield's seem to me a fine expression of strange beauty:

WILD DUCK

Twilight. Red in the West.
Dimness. A glow on the wood;
The teams plod home to rest.
The wild duck comes to glean.
O souls not understood,
What a wild cry in the pool;
What things have the farm ducks seen
That they cry so—huddle and cry?
Only the soul that goes,
Eager. Eager. Flying—
Over the globe of the moon,
Over the wood that glows.
Wings linked. Necks a-strain
A rush and a wild crying.
A cry of the long pain
In the reeds of a steel lagoon
In a land that no man knows.

But, to exemplify lyric beauty just marred at the close by running beyond the edge of perfection, I will take a sonnet of the same poet's:

Go spend your penny, Beauty, when you will,
In the grave's darkness let the stamp be lost.
The water still will bubble from the hill,
And April quick the meadows with her ghost;
Over the grass the daffodils will shiver,
The primroses with their pale beauty abound,
The blackbird be a lover, and make quiver
With his glad singing the great soul of the ground;
So that if the body rot, it will not matter;
Up in the earth the great game will go on,
The coming of Spring and the running of the water,
And the young things glad of the womb's darkness gone.
And the joy we felt will be a part of the glory
In the lover's kiss that makes the old couple's story.

The last two lines exemplify—to me at least—that sudden emotional failure which blurs so much lyrical expression, even of the best poets.

. . . . . .

And while on the subject of lyrical expression it would seem fitting to consider what is known as journalese. Many journalists, of course, never stain their pages with that peculiar lyricism. And yet no event, I suppose, of dramatic moment occurs without the Press somewhere inflating the word-currency. The symptoms of journalese are the free use of clichés, and of artificial stimulation, through over-expression, gross or slight. It loves to say "largely"; dotes on any word with "cata" in it—catastrophe, cataclysm; battens on national fevers, and plays no small part in keeping a country's temperature above normal. Whether a deliberate offence, or the natural expression of the third-rate mind, it is highly infectious, and has been known to attack statesmen and other dignitaries. When journalese was at its rifest the Ministry of Health was established—possibly a coincidence.

All over-expression, whether by journalists, poets, novelists, or clergymen, is bad for the language, bad for the mind; and, by over-expression I mean the use of words running beyond the sincere feeling of writer or speaker or beyond what the event will sanely carry. From time to time a crusade is preached against it from the text: "The cat was on the mat." Some Victorian scribe, we must suppose, once wrote: "Stretching herself with feline grace, and emitting those sounds immemorially connected with satisfaction, Grimalkin lay on a rug whose richly variegated pattern spoke eloquently of the Orient and all the wonders of the Arabian Nights." And an exasperated reader annotated the margin with that shorter version of the absorbing event. How the late Georgian scribe will express the occurrence we do not yet know. Thus, perhaps: "What there is of cat is cat is what of cat there lying cat is what on what of mat lying cat." The reader will probably annotate the margin with: "Some cat!"

. . . . . .

I have not said anything, so far, about dramatic expression. The subject is delicate. When seeing a play, I am curiously absorbed in the dialogue—the interest, emotions, and suspense aroused by it. However birds may sing, streams flow, and

thunders roll, on the stage; however luridly, austerely, symbolically, classically, or realistically the scene be architectured, I am seeking the human figure and the words of his mouth—the "Out, out, brief candle!" And this is unfortunate, because dramatic expression through mere words seems to be going out of fashion. Cinema, Revue, Ballet, Puppet Show, and the architectural designer—all are in conspiracy to lower its importance. When enjoying a film, a ballet, a book by Mr. Gordon Craig, I become uneasy. What if words are doomed—merely to be used to fill in the interstices of architecture, the intervals between jazz music, or just written on a board! What if the dramatist is to become second fiddler, a hack hired and commissioned! Shakespeare remarked: "The play's the thing!" We echo the saying, feel virtuous, and take our tickets for "The Three-Cornered Hat," "Lilac Time," "Charlie Chaplin," and "The Follies"; or, bemoaning the absence of British drama, sit down to wait for a National Theatre.

Do not, I beg, misunderstand me! Dialogue can be intolerable. Out of the whole plays by noted dramatists, half the words could be blotted with advantage. Many fourth acts would be better returned to the limbo of their authors' brains. And many characters have perished of their creators' theoretical loquacity! I stand by the definition I once gave, so rashly, for it has been accusing me of failure ever since: "Good dialogue is character. . . . The art of writing true dramatic dialogue is an austere art, denying itself all license, grudging every sentence devoted to the mere machinery of the play, suppressing all jokes and epigrams severed from character, relying for fun and pathos on the fun and tears of life. From start to finish, good dialogue is hand-made, like good lace; clear, of fine texture, furthering with each thread the harmony and strength of a design to which all must be subordinated."

It is curiously symptomatic of our variegated epoch that alongside the movement against dialogue, plays are now and then written more full of polished and subtle conversation than ever plays have been. Such plays, however, though very inter-

esting to read, hardly come under the heading of dramatic expression; they belong rather to a new form of psychological literature, intended, if not intentionally, for the study.

After all, there is no end to the extension of form—to the moulds into which we may run this language of ours, the greatest medium of expression in the world to-day. Including its American variety, the English language is the word-coin of wellnigh one hundred and seventy million white people, spread over nearly half the land surface of the earth. It is the language of practically every sea; the official tongue of some three hundred and fifty million brown and black and yellow people; the accredited business medium of the world; and more and more taught in South America, Japan, and some European countries. It would appear, indeed, to have a certain start of the artificial languages, Esperanto, Volapuk, and Ido, in the race for the honour of becoming the second language used in every country.

Now, the peace of the world and the march of true civilization are intimately wrapped up with the exchange of international thought and the stablishment of a single intercommunicating speech common to the educated in all countries. In days when hardly any orator succeeds in reseating himself without mentioning the peace of the world, I am writing for a word in favour of that peace-promoter, the adoption in common of a second language. When educated expression in all countries finds the means of direct linguistic communication, the Cinderella, Peace, may have, at last, some chance of appearing at the ball.

The most beneficent task which the League of Nations could perform would be the conjuring of an arrangement to this end from the peoples of the earth. The ideal course is an adoption by agreement of a single second language to be taught in all countries. And I regret profoundly that there seems little likelihood of any such consummation.

The establishment of a second language, so far as present indications point, appears to rest rather upon the drift of accidental—or shall we say of natural—causes, as an unconscious

matter of practical expediency and by way of the line of least resistance. And any impartial scrutiny must at this moment of time place English at the head of all languages as the most likely to become, in a natural unforced way, the single intercommunicating tongue. There is a tide in the affairs of language as in the affairs of men. The Napoleonic wars left French the predominant medium of mental exchange. French is still perhaps the leading speech in Europe. But French will never now spread effectively by natural means beyond Europe and North Africa. The decline of Europe, the expansion of the British Empire, the magnetism and ever-increasing power of America, are making English the real world-language. Its tide was never before so high. This is a solemn thought for us who believe in our mother tongue and all it stands for—our hopes, our learning, our customs, our history, and our dreams.

I would not for a moment think we have the right to prefer the claims of our tongue against the considered choice of the Nations in conference. If they would but choose a single intercommunicating second language, no matter what, it would be for us to abide loyally thereby. But if they will not, then, in the interests of all, it is our duty, as it seems to me, to take the tide of English at the flood, that it may lead on to the fortune of the world at large.

. . . . . .

Surely we are not entitled to the slippered, unbraced word-garb of stay-at-homes; we need the attire of language braced and brushed, and fit to meet all glances. For our language is on view as never language was.

I often wonder, if only I didn't know English, what I should think of the sound of it, well talked. I believe I should esteem it a soft speech, very pleasant to the ear, varied but unemphatic, singularly free from gutteral or metallic sounds, restful, dignified, and friendly. I believe—how prejudiced one is!—that I would choose it, well spoken, before any language in the world, as the medium of expression of which one would tire last. Blend

though it be, hybrid between two main stocks, and tinctured by many a visiting word, it has acquired rich harmony of its own, a vigorous individuality. It is worthy of any destiny, however wide.

The mind, taking a bird's-eye view of the English language from Chaucer to this day, noting the gradual but amazing changes it has undergone, will find it impossible, I think, to give the palm to any particular period in all those centuries. As with the lover of flowers who, through the moving seasons of the year, walks his garden, watching the tulip, and the apple blossom, the lilac, the iris, and the rose bloom in their good time, and cannot tell which most delights his eyes, nor when his garden reaches its full sweetness, so it is with us who love good English. Chaucer, Shakespeare, the makers of the Authorised Version, Defoe, Swift, Addison, Johnson, Burke, or Bright, you cannot crown the English of any one of these and say: "Here the pinnacle was definitely reached." They were masters of expression, they used supremely well the English language of their days, tuning the instrument for their contemporaries, enlarging it for those who came after them. But the possibilities of this great organ of expression transcend even Shakespeare or the Bible. Dare we say that English is past its prime? Shall we accept defeat, and write the word decadent across the page? We cannot judge as yet the English of our day: we see the trees delicate or rank, leafy or dead in its bewildering wood, but the wood itself we cannot see. Every generation, and especially every English generation, is tempted to depreciate itself. This habit, however amiable and wholesome, is insincere, for there is in nearly all of us that which secretly stands by the age we live in.

I like to regard the English language as still in the making, capable of new twists and bold captures; yet I think our attitude towards it should have more reverence; that we should love our mother tongue as we love our country, and try to express ourselves with vigour, dignity, and grace.

And so I end this wandering discourse with an affirmation of belief in the vitality, variety, the supple strength and subtle

tones of our rich and ancient language; and of a hope that we may come to use it, man for man, woman for woman, speaking and writing, throughout our island, better than it has ever yet been used, with a fuller sense of its music and expressive power.

PEAR BLOSSOM [1]

Weighed down by her three parcels, the little model pursued her way to Hound Street. At the door of No. 1 the son of the lame woman, a tall weedy youth with a white face, was resting his legs alternately, and smoking a cigarette. Closing one eye, he addressed her thus:

"'Allo, Miss! Kerry your parcels for you?"

The little model gave him a look. "Mind your own business!" it said; but there was that in the flicker of her eyelashes which more than nullified the snub.

Entering her room, she deposited the parcels on her bed, and untied the strings with quick, pink fingers. When she had freed the garments from wrappings and spread them out, she knelt down, and began to touch them, putting her nose down once or twice to sniff the linen and feel its texture. There were little frills attached here and there, and to these she paid particular attention, ruffling their edges with the palms of her hands, while the holy look came back to her face. Rising at length, she locked the door, drew down the blind, undressed from head to foot, and put on the new garments. Letting her hair down, she turned herself luxuriously round and round before the too-small looking glass. There was utter satisfaction, in each gesture of that whole operation, as if her spirit, long-starved, were having a good meal. In this rapt contemplation of herself, all childish vanity and expectancy, and all that wonderful quality found in simple unspiritual natures of delighting in the present moment, were perfectly displayed. So, motionless, with her hair loose on her neck, she was like one of those half-hours of Spring that have lost their restlessness and are content just to *be*.

[1] From *Fraternity*. Reprinted by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

Presently, however, as though suddenly remembering that her happiness was not utterly complete, she went to a drawer, took out a packet of pear-drops, and put one in her mouth.

The sun, near to setting, had found its way through a hole in the blind, and touched her neck. She turned as though she had received a kiss, and, raising a corner of the blind, peered out. The pear-tree, which, to the annoyance of its proprietor, was placed so close to the back court of this low-class house as almost to seem to belong to it, was bathed in slanting sunlight. No tree in all the world could have looked more fair than it did just then in its garb of gilded bloom. With her hand up to her bare neck, and her cheeks indrawn from sucking the sweet, the little model fixed her eyes on the tree. Her expression did not change; she showed no signs of admiration. Her gaze passed on to the back windows of the house that really owned the pear-tree, spying out whether anyone could see her—hoping, perhaps, someone *would* see her while she was feeling so nice and new. Then, dropping the blind, she went back to the glass and began to pin her hair up. When this was done she stood for a long minute looking at her old brown skirt and blouse, hesitating to defile her new-found purity. At last she put them on and drew up the blind. The sunlight had passed off the pear-tree; its bloom was now white, and almost as still as snow. The little model put another sweet into her mouth, and producing from her pocket an ancient leather purse, counted out her money. Evidently discovering that it was no more than she expected, she sighed, and rummaged out of a top drawer an old illustrated magazine.

She sat down on the bed, and, turning the leaves rapidly till she reached a certain page, rested the paper in her lap. Her eyes were fixed on a photograph in the left-hand corner—one of those effigies of writers that appear occasionally in the public press. Under it were printed the words: "Mr. Hilary Dallison." And suddenly she heaved another sigh.

The room grew darker; the wind, getting up as the sun went down, blew a few dropped petals of the pear-tree against the window-pane.

GEORGE MOORE

Novelist, critic

Although born in Ireland, the first great influence upon Mr. Moore's work was French. He lived in Paris for many years and absorbed the ideas and the art of both French realists and symbolists. Later, he returned to Ireland and the great Irish literary movement. Accordingly, one can see in his work the more sophisticated artistry of the French mingled with the quality of mysticism and religion of the Irish. Mr. Moore is among those writers who have had the leisure and freedom to create their stories where and how they pleased.

His dedication of *The Brook Kerith* to a friend acknowledges the literary influence of the Bible:

It appears that you wished to give me a book for Christmas, but were in doubt what book to give me as I seemed to have little taste for reading, so in your embarrassment you gave me a Bible. It lies on my table now with the date 1898 on the fly-leaf—my constant companion and chief literary interest for the last eighteen years. Itself a literature, it has led me into many various literatures and into the society of scholars. I owe so much to your Bible that I cannot let pass the publication of *The Brook Kerith* without thanking you for it again.[1]

—George Moore.

[1] Dedication to *The Brook Kerith.*

JOSEPH'S DREAM [1]

It was at the end of a summer evening, long after his usual bedtime, that Joseph, sitting on his grandmother's knee, heard her tell that Kish having lost his asses sent Saul, his son, to seek them in the land of the Benjamites and the land of Shalisha, whither they might have strayed. But they were not in these lands, Son, she continued, nor in Zulp, whither Saul went afterwards, and being then tired out with looking for them he said to the servant: we shall do well to forget the asses, lest my father should ask what has become of us. But the servant, being of a mind that Kish would not care to see them without the asses, said to young Saul: let us go up into yon city, for a great seer lives there and he will be able to put us in the right way to come upon the asses. But we have little in our wallet to recompense him, Saul answered, only half a loaf and a little wine at the end of the bottle. We have more than that, the servant replied, and opening his hand he showed a quarter of a shekel of silver to Saul, who said: he will take that in payment. Whereupon they walked into Arimathea, casting their eyes about for somebody to direct them to the seer's house. And seeing some maidens at the well, come to draw water, they asked them if the seer had been in the city that day, and were answered that he had been seen and would offer sacrifice that morning, as had been announced. He must be on his way now to the high rock, one of the maidens cried after them, and they pressed through the people till none was in front of them but an old man; overtaking him they asked if he could point out the seer's house to them, to which he answered sharply: I am the seer, and fell at once to gazing on Saul as if he saw in him the one that had been revealed

[1] From *The Brook Kerith*, Chapter I. Reprinted by permission of The Macmillan Company.

to him. For hearken, Son, seers have foresight, and the seer had been warned overnight that the Lord would send a young man to him, so the moment he saw Saul he knew him to be the one the Lord had promised, and he said: thou art he whom the Lord has promised to send me for anointment, but more than that I cannot tell thee, being on my way to offer sacrifice, but afterwards we will eat together, and all that has been revealed to me I will tell. Thou understandest me, Son, the old woman crooned, the Lord has been with Samuel beforetimes and had promised to send the King of Israel to him for anointment, and the moment he laid eyes on Saul he knew him to be the king; and that was why he asked him to eat with him after sacrifice. Yes, Granny, I understand: but did the Lord set the asses astray that Saul might follow them and come to Samuel to be made a King? I daresay there was something like that at the bottom of it, the old woman answered, and continued her story till her knees ached under the boy's weight.

The child's asleep, she said, and on the instant he awoke crying: no, Granny, I wasn't asleep. I heard all you said and would like to be a prophet. A prophet, Joseph, and to anoint a king? But there are no more prophets or kings in Israel. And now, Joseph, my little prophet, 'tis bedtime and past it. Come. I didn't say I wanted to anoint kings, he answered, and refused to go to bed, though manifestly he could hardly keep awake. I'll wait up for Father.

Now what can the child want his father for at this hour? she muttered as she went about the room, not guessing that he was angry and resentful, that her words had wounded him deeply and that he was asking himself, in his corner, if she thought him too stupid to be a prophet.

I'll tell thee no more stories, she said to him, but he answered that he did not want to hear her stories, and betwixt feelings of anger and shame his head drooped, and he slept in his chair till the door opened and his father's footsteps crossed the threshold.

Now, he said to himself, Granny will tell father that I said

I'd like to be a prophet. And feigning sleep he listened, determined to hear the worst that could be said of him. But they did not speak about him but of the barrels of salt fish that were to go to Beth-Shemesh on the morrow; which was their usual talk. So he slipped from his chair and bade his father good-night. A resentful good-night it was; and his good-night to grandmother was still more resentful. But she found an excuse for his rudeness, saying that his head was full of sleep—a remark that annoyed him considerably and sent him upstairs wishing that women would not talk about things they do not understand. I'll ask father in the morning why Granny laughed at me for saying I'd like to be a prophet. But as morning seemed still a long way ahead he tried to find a reason, but could find no better one than that prophets were usually old men. But I shall be old in time to come and have a beard. Father has a beard and they can't tell that I won't have a beard, and a white one too, so why should they——

His senses were numbing, and he must have fallen asleep soon after, for when he awoke it seemed to him that he had been asleep a long time, several hours at least, so many things had happened or seemed to have happened; but as he recovered his mind all the dream happenings melted away, and he could remember only his mother. She had been dead four years, but in his dream she looked as she had always looked, and had scolded Granny for laughing at him. He tried to remember what else she had said but her words faded out of his mind and he fell asleep again. In this second sleep an old man rose up by his bedside and told him that he was the prophet Samuel, who though he had been dead a thousand years had heard him say he would like to be a prophet. But shall I be a prophet? Joseph asked, and as Samuel did not answer he cried out as loudly as he could: shall I? shall I?

What ails thee, Son? he heard his grandmother calling to him, and he answered: an old man, an old man. Ye be dreaming, she mumbled between sleeping and waking, go to sleep like a good boy, and don't dream any more. I will, Granny, but don't be

getting up; the bed-clothes don't want settling; now I am well tucked in, he pleaded; and fell asleep praying that Granny had not heard him ask Samuel if he would be a prophet.

A memory of his dream of Samuel came upon him while she dressed him, and he hoped she had forgotten all about it; but his father mentioned at breakfast that he had been awakened by cries. It was Joseph crying out in his dream, Dan, disturbed thee last night: such cries, "Shall I? Shall I?" And when I asked "What ails thee?" the only answer I got was "An old man."

Dan, Joseph's father, wondered why Joseph should seem so disheartened and why he should murmur so perfunctorily that he could not remember his dream. But if he had forgotten it, why trouble him further? If we are to forget anything it were well that we should choose our dreams; at which piece of incredulity his mother shook her head, being firm in the belief that there was much sense in dreams and that they could be interpreted to the advantage of everybody.

Dan said: if that be so, let him tell thee his dream. But Joseph hung his head and pushed his plate away; and seeing him so morose they left him to his sulks and fell to talking of dreams that had come true. Joseph had never heard them speak of anything so interesting before, and though he suspected that they were making fun of him he could not do else than listen, till becoming convinced suddenly that they were talking in good earnest without intention of fooling him he began to regret that he had said he had forgotten his dream, and rapped out: he was the prophet Samuel. What art thou saying, Joseph? his father asked. Joseph would say no more, but it pleased him to observe that neither his father nor his granny laughed at his admission, and seeing how interested they were in his dream he said: if thou wouldst know all, Samuel said he had heard me say that I'd like to be a prophet, and that was why he came back from the dead. But, Father, is it true that we are his Descendants? He said I was.

A most extraordinary dream, his father answered, for it has

always been held in the family that we are descended from him. Now, Joseph, is this the story that thou wouldst be telling us, that the old man in thy dream said he was Samuel? How should I have known if he hadn't told me? Joseph looked from one to the other and wondered why they had kept the secret of his ancestor from him. Granny laughed at me yesterday, when I said I'd like to be a prophet. What do you say now? Answer me that. And he continued to look from one to the other for an answer. But neither had the wit to find an answer, so amazed were they at the news that the prophet Samuel had visited Joseph in a dream; and satisfied at the impression he had made and a little frightened by their silence Joseph stole out of the room, leaving his parents to place whatever interpretation they pleased on his dream.

ARNOLD BENNETT

Novelist

"Author of the five towns" is a familiar appellation for Mr. Bennett. "Bursley," "Hanbridge," "Longshaw," "The Hill," and "Knype" are the industrial towns that appear in his most notable stories. Of these, Bursley, the home of the Bainses, is the one that figures in his greatest novel, *The Old Wives' Tale*. The thing that has made his books, and this book in particular, so widely appreciated is that his characters are not limited to certain people of certain places in England. The truth of the portraits of his people and the influence of their environment upon them is more universal than local.

"The King and Queen were present at a first night in a London theatre last evening for the initial time in their reign." I take this from the dramatic criticism, not of a provincial, but of a London daily. It is quite a first-rate example of bad English. The culprit, whose name is well known to myself and other members of the London literary police force, evidently thought that it would be inelegant to use the same word twice in two lines: so he substituted "initial" for "first" in the second line. The affair must have cost him considerable cerebration, and no doubt he was rather pleased with the elegance of the result. Perhaps he had never reflected that words express ideas, and that therefore, if a precise idea recurs, the precise word for that idea ought to recur. The idea expressed by the word "first" is precise enough, and no other English word

means what "first" means. Certainly "initial" does not mean "first." Still, the man meant well. His misfortune was that, having picked up a good notion without examining it, he imagined that repetition was inelegant in itself. Repetition is only wrong when it is unintentional, and when, being horrid to the ear, it is reasonably and honestly avoidable. On the other hand, repetition, used with tact and courage, may achieve not merely elegance but positive brilliance. What a phrase—"the initial time"!

—ARNOLD BENNETT, "Style."[1]

[1] From *Things That Have Interested Me*. Reprinted by permission of James B. Pinker & Son, and Doubleday, Doran and Company.

CONSTANCE AND SOPHIA [1]

For Constance and Sophia had the disadvantage of living in the middle ages. The crinoline had not quite reached its full circumference, and the dress-improver had not even been thought of. In all the Five Towns there was not a public bath, nor a free library, nor a municipal park, nor a telephone, nor yet a board-school. People had not understood the vital necessity of going away to the seaside every year. Bishop Colenso had just staggered Christianity by his shameless notions on the Pentateuch. Half Lancashire was starving on account of the American war. Garroting was the chief amusement of the homicidal classes. Incredible as it may appear, there was nothing but a horse-tram running between Bursley and Hanbridge—and that only twice an hour; and between the other towns no stage of any kind! One went to Longshaw as one now goes to Pekin. It was an era so dark and backward that one might wonder how people could sleep in their beds at night for thinking about their sad state.

Happily the inhabitants of the Five Towns in that era were passably pleased with themselves, and they never even suspected that they were not quite modern and quite awake. They thought that the intellectual, the industrial, and the social movements had gone about as far as these movements could go, and they were amazed at their own progress. Instead of being humble and ashamed, they actually showed pride in their pitiful achievements. They ought to have looked forward meekly to the prodigious feats of posterity; but, having too little faith and too much conceit, they were content to look behind and make comparisons with the past. They did not foresee the miraculous

[1] From *The Old Wives' Tale*, pp. 13–31. Reprinted by permission of Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., publishers.

generation which is us. A poor, blind, complacent people! The ludicrous horse-car was typical of them. The driver rang a huge bell, five minutes before starting, that could be heard from the Wesleyan Chapel to the Cock Yard, and then after deliberations and hesitations the vehicle rolled off on its rails into unknown dangers while passengers shouted good-bye. At Bleakridge it had to stop for the turnpike, and it was assisted up the mountains of Leveson Place and Sutherland Street (towards Hanbridge) by a third horse, on whose back was perched a tiny, whip-cracking boy; that boy lived like a shuttle on the road between Leveson Place and Sutherland Street, and even in wet weather he was the envy of all other boys. After half an hour's perilous transit the car drew up solemnly in a narrow street by the *Signal* office in Hanbridge, and the ruddy driver, having revolved many times the polished iron handle of his sole brake, turned his attention to his passengers in calm triumph, dismissing them with a sort of unsung doxology.

And this was regarded as the last word of traction! A whip-cracking boy on a tip horse! Oh, blind, blind! You could not foresee the hundred and twenty electric cars that now rush madly bumping and thundering at twenty miles an hour through all the main streets of the district!

So that naturally Sophia, infected with the pride of her period, had no misgivings whatever concerning the final elegance of the princesses. She studied them as the fifteen apostles of the *ne plus ultra;* then, having taken some flowers and plumes out of a box, amid warnings from Constance, she retreated behind the glass, and presently emerged as a great lady in the style of the princesses. Her mother's tremendous new gown ballooned about her in all its fantastic richness and expensiveness. And with the gown she had put on her mother's importance—that mien of assured authority, of capacity tested in many a crisis, which characterized Mrs. Baines, and which Mrs. Baines seemed to impart to her dresses even before she had regularly worn them. For it was a fact that Mrs. Baines's empty garments inspired

respect, as though some essence had escaped from her and remained in them.

"Sophia!"

Constance stayed her needle, and, without lifting her head, gazed, with eyes raised from the wool-work, motionless at the posturing figure of her sister. It was sacrilege that she was witnessing, a prodigious irreverence. She was conscious of an expectation that punishment would instantly fall on this daring, impious child. But she, who never felt these mad, amazing impulses, could nevertheless only smile fearfully.

"Sophia!" she breathed, with an intensity of alarm that merged into condoning admiration. "Whatever will you do next?"

Sophia's lovely flushed face crowned the extraordinary structure like a blossom, scarcely controlling its laughter. She was as tall as her mother, and as imperious, as crested, and proud; and in spite of the pigtail, the girlish semi-circular comb, and the loose foal-like limbs, she could support as well as her mother the majesty of the gimp-embroidered dress. Her eyes sparkled with all the challenges of the untried virgin as she minced about the showroom. Abounding life inspired her movements. The confident and fierce joy of youth shone on her brow. "What thing on earth equals me?" she seemed to demand with enchanting and yet ruthless arrogance. She was the daughter of a respected, bedridden draper in an insignificant town, lost in the central labyrinth of England, if you like; yet what manner of man, confronted with her, would or could have denied her naïve claim to dominion? She stood, in her mother's hoops, for the desire of the world. And in the innocence of her soul she knew it! The heart of a young girl mysteriously speaks and tells her of her power long ere she can use her power. If she can find nothing else to subdue, you may catch her in the early years subduing a gate-post or drawing homage from an empty chair. Sophia's experimental victim was Constance, with suspended needle and soft glance that shot out from the lowered face.

Then Sophia fell, in stepping backwards; the pyramid was

overbalanced; great distended rings of silk trembled and swayed gigantically on the floor, and Sophia's small feet lay like the feet of a doll on the rim of the largest circle, which curved and arched above them like a cavern's mouth. The abrupt transition of her features from assured pride to ludicrous astonishment and alarm was comical enough to have sent into wild uncharitable laughter any creature less humane than Constance. But Constance sprang to her, a single embodied instinct of benevolence, with her snub nose, and tried to raise her.

"Oh, Sophia!" she cried compassionately—that voice seemed not to know the tones of reproof—"I do hope you've not messed it, because mother would be so——"

The words were interrupted by the sound of groans beyond the door leading to the bedrooms. The groans, indicating direst physical torment, grew louder. The two girls stared, wonderstruck and afraid, at the door, Sophia with her dark head raised, and Constance with her arms round Sophia's waist. The door opened, letting in a much-magnified sound of groans, and there entered a youngish, undersized man, who was frantically clutching his head in his hands and contorting all the muscles of his face. On perceiving the sculptural group of two prone, interlocked girls, one enveloped in a crinoline, and the other with a wool-work bunch of flowers pinned to her knee, he jumped back, ceased groaning, arranged his face, and seriously tried to pretend that it was not he who had been vocal in anguish, that, indeed, he was just passing as a casual, ordinary wayfarer through the showroom to the shop below. He blushed darkly; and the girls also blushed.

"Oh, I beg pardon, I'm sure!" said this youngish man suddenly; and with a swift turn he disappeared whence he had come.

He was Mr. Povey, a person universally esteemed, both within and without the shop, the surrogate of bedridden Mr. Baines, the unfailing comfort and stand-by of Mrs. Baines, the fount and radiating centre of order and discipline in the shop; a quiet, diffident, secretive, tedious, and obstinate youngish man, absolutely faithful, absolutely efficient in his sphere; without

brilliance, without distinction; perhaps rather little-minded, certainly narrow-minded; but what a force in the shop! The shop was inconceivable without Mr. Povey. He was under twenty and not out of his apprenticeship when Mr. Baines had been struck down, and he had at once proved his worth. Of the assistants, he alone slept in the house. His bedroom was next to that of his employer; there was a door between the two chambers, and the two steps led down from the larger to the less.

The girls regained their feet, Sophia with Constance's help. It was not easy to right a capsized crinoline. They both began to laugh nervously, with a trace of hysteria.

"I thought he'd gone to the dentist's," whispered Constance.

Mr. Povey's toothache had been causing anxiety in the microcosm for two days, and it had been clearly understood at dinner that Thursday morning that Mr. Povey was to set forth to Oulsnam Bros., the dentists at Hillport, without any delay. Only on Thursdays and Sundays did Mr. Povey dine with the family. On other days he dined later, by himself, but at the family table, when Mrs. Baines or one of the assistants could "relieve" him in the shop. Before starting out to visit her elder sister at Axe, Mrs. Baines had insisted to Mr. Povey that he had eaten practically nothing but "slops" for twenty-four hours, and that if he was not careful she would have him on her hands. He had replied in his quietest, most sagacious, matter-of-fact tone—the tone that carried weight with all who heard it—that he had only been waiting for Thursday afternoon, and should of course go instantly to Oulsnams' and have the thing attended to in a proper manner. He had even added that persons who put off going to the dentist's were simply sowing trouble for themselves.

None could possibly have guessed that Mr. Povey was afraid of going to the dentist's. But such was the case. He had not dared to set forth. The paragon of commonsense, pictured by most people as being somehow unliable to human frailties, could not yet screw himself up to the point of ringing a dentist's door-bell.

"He did look funny," said Sophia. "I wonder what he thought. I couldn't help laughing!"

Constance made no answer; but when Sophia had resumed her own clothes, and it was ascertained beyond doubt that the new dress had not suffered, and Constance herself was calmly stitching again, she said, poising her needle as she had poised it to watch Sophia:

"I was just wondering whether something oughtn't to be done for Mr. Povey."

"What?" Sophia demanded.

"Has he gone back to his bedroom?"

"Let's go and listen," said Sophia the adventuress.

They went, through the showroom door, past the foot of the stairs leading to the second storey, down the long corridor broken in the middle by two steps and carpeted with a narrow bordered carpet whose parallel lines increased its apparent length. They went on tiptoe, sticking close to one another. Mr. Povey's door was slightly ajar. They listened; not a sound.

"Mr. Povey!" Constance coughed discreetly.

No reply. It was Sophia who pushed the door open. Constance made an elderly prim plucking gesture at Sophia's bare arm, but she followed Sophia gingerly into the forbidden room, which was, however, empty. The bed had been ruffled, and on it lay a book, "The Harvest of a Quiet Eye."

"Harvest of a quiet tooth!" Sophia whispered, giggling very low.

"Hsh!" Constance put her lips forward.

From the next room came a regular, muffled, oratorical sound, as though some one had begun many years ago to address a meeting and had forgotten to leave off and never would leave off. They were familiar with the sound, and they quitted Mr. Povey's chamber in fear of disturbing it. At the same moment Mr. Povey reappeared, this time in the drawing-room doorway at the other extremity of the long corridor. He seemed to be trying ineffectually to flee from his tooth as a murderer tries to flee from his conscience.

"Oh, Mr. Povey!" said Constance quickly—for he had surprised them coming out of his bedroom; "we were just looking for you."

"To see if we could do anything for you," Sophia added.

"Oh no, thanks!" said Mr. Povey.

Then he began to come down the corridor, slowly.

"You haven't been to the dentist's," said Constance sympathetically.

"No, I haven't," said Mr. Povey, as if Constance was indicating a fact which had escaped his attention. "The truth is, I thought it looked like rain, and if I'd got wet—you see——"

Miserable Mr. Povey!

"Yes," said Constance, "you certainly ought to keep out of draughts. Don't you think it would be a good thing if you went and sat in the parlour? There's a fire there."

"I shall be all right, thank you," said Mr. Povey. And after a pause: "Well, thanks, I will."

The girls made way for him to pass them at the head of the twisting stairs which led down to the parlour. Constance followed, and Sophia followed Constance.

"Have father's chair," said Constance.

There were two rocking-chairs with fluted backs covered by antimacassars, one on either side of the hearth. That to the left was still entitled "father's chair," though its owner had not sat in it since long before the Crimean war, and would never sit in it again.

"I think I'd sooner have the other one," said Mr. Povey, "because it's on the right side, you see." And he touched his right cheek.

Having taken Mrs. Baines's chair, he bent his face down to the fire, seeking comfort from its warmth. Sophia poked the fire, whereupon Mr. Povey abruptly withdrew his face. He then felt something light on his shoulders. Constance had taken the antimacassar from the back of the chair, and protected him with it from the draughts. He did not instantly

rebel, and therefore was permanently barred from rebellion. He was entrapped by the antimacassar. It formally constituted him an invalid, and Constance and Sophia his nurses. Constance drew the curtain across the street door. No draught could come from the window, for the window was not "made to open." The age of ventilation had not arrived. Sophia shut the other two doors. And, each near a door, the girls gazed at Mr. Povey behind his back, irresolute, but filled with a delicious sense of responsibility.

The situation was on a different plane now. The seriousness of Mr. Povey's toothache, which became more and more manifest, had already wiped out the ludicrous memory of the encounter in the showroom. Looking at these two big girls, with their short-sleeved black frocks and black aprons, and their smooth hair, and their composed serious faces, one would have judged them incapable of the least lapse from an archangelic primness; Sophia especially presented a marvellous imitation of saintly innocence. As for the toothache, its action on Mr. Povey was apparently periodic; it gathered to a crisis like a wave, gradually, the torture increasing till the wave broke and left Mr. Povey exhausted, but free for a moment from pain. These crises recurred about once a minute. And now, accustomed to the presence of the young virgins, and having tacitly acknowledged by his acceptance of the antimacassar that his state was abnormal, he gave himself up frankly to affliction. He concealed nothing of his agony, which was fully displayed by sudden contortions of his frame, and frantic oscillations of the rocking-chair. Presently, as he lay back enfeebled in the wash of a spent wave, he murmured with a sick man's voice:

"I suppose you haven't got any laudanum?"

The girls started into life. "Laudanum, Mr. Povey?"

"Yes, to hold in my mouth."

He sat up, tense; another wave was forming. The excellent fellow was lost to all self-respect, all decency.

"There's sure to be some in mother's cupboard," said Sophia.

Constance, who bore Mrs. Baines's bunch of keys at her girdle,

a solemn trust, moved a little fearfully to a corner cupboard which was hung in the angle to the right of the projecting fireplace, over a shelf on which stood a large copper tea-urn. That corner cupboard, of oak inlaid with maple and ebony in a simple border pattern, was typical of the room. It was of a piece with the deep green "flock" wall paper, and the tea-urn, and the rocking-chairs with their antimacassars, and the harmonium in rosewood with a Chinese paper-maché tea-caddy on the top of it; even with the carpet, certainly the most curious parlour carpet that ever was, being made of lengths of the stair-carpet sewn together side by side. That corner cupboard was already old in service; it had held the medicines of generations. It gleamed darkly with the grave and genuine polish which comes from ancient use alone. The key which Constance chose from her bunch was like the cupboard, smooth and shining with years; it fitted and turned very easily, yet with a firm snap. The single wide door opened sedately as a portal.

The girls examined the sacred interior, which had the air of being inhabited by an army of diminutive prisoners, each crying aloud with the full strength of its label to be set free on a mission.

"There it is!" said Sophia eagerly.

And there it was: a blue bottle, with a saffron label, "Caution. POISON. Laudanum. Charles Critchlow, M.P.S. Dispensing Chemist. St. Luke's Square, Bursley."

Those large capitals frightened the girls. Constance took the bottle as she might have taken a loaded revolver, and she glanced at Sophia. Their omnipotent, all-wise mother was not present to tell them what to do. They, who had never decided, had to decide now. And Constance was the elder. Must this fearsome stuff, whose very name was a name of fear, be introduced in spite of printed warnings into Mr. Povey's mouth? The responsibility was terrifying.

"Perhaps I'd just better ask Mr. Critchlow," Constance faltered.

The expectation of beneficent laudanum had enlivened Mr.

Povey, had already, indeed, by a sort of suggestion, half cured his toothache.

"Oh no!" he said. "No need to ask Mr. Critchlow . . . Two or three drops in a little water." He showed impatience to be at the laudanum.

The girls knew that an antipathy existed between the chemist and Mr. Povey.

"It's sure to be all right," said Sophia. "I'll get the water."

With youthful cries and alarms they succeeded in pouring four mortal dark drops (one more than Constance intended) into a cup containing a little water. And as they handed the cup to Mr. Povey their faces were the faces of affrighted comical conspirators. They felt so old and they looked so young.

Mr. Povey imbibed eagerly of the potion, put the cup on the mantelpiece, and then tilted his head to the right so as to submerge the affected tooth. In this posture he remained, awaiting the sweet influence of the remedy. The girls, out of a nice modesty, turned away, for Mr. Povey must not swallow the medicine, and they preferred to leave him unhampered in the solution of a delicate problem. When next they examined him, he was leaning back in the rocking-chair with his mouth open and his eyes shut.

"Has it done you any good, Mr. Povey?"

"I think I'll lie down on the sofa for a minute," was Mr. Povey's strange reply; and forthwith he sprang up and flung himself on to the horse-hair sofa between the fireplace and the window, where he lay stripped of all his dignity, a mere beaten animal in a grey suit with peculiar coat-tails, and a very creased waistcoat, and a lapel that was planted with pins, and a paper collar and close-fitting paper cuffs.

Constance ran after him with the antimacassar, which she spread softly on his shoulders; and Sophia put another one over his thin little legs, all drawn up.

They then gazed at their handiwork, with secret self-accusations and the most dreadful misgivings.

"He surely never swallowed it!" Constance whispered.

"He's asleep, anyhow," said Sophia, more loudly.

Mr. Povey was certainly asleep, and his mouth was very wide open—like a shop-door. The only question was whether his sleep was not an eternal sleep; the only question was whether he was not out of his pain for ever.

Then he snored—horribly; his snore seemed a portent of disaster.

Sophia approached him as though he were a bomb, and stared, growing bolder, into his mouth.

"Oh, Con," she summoned her sister, "do come and look! It's too droll!"

In an instant all their four eyes were exploring the singular landscape of Mr. Povey's mouth. In a corner, to the right of that interior, was one sizeable fragment of a tooth, that was attached to Mr. Povey by the slenderest tie, so that at each respiration of Mr. Povey, when his body slightly heaved and the gale moaned in the cavern, this tooth moved separately, showing that its long connection with Mr. Povey was drawing to a close.

"That's the one," said Sophia, pointing. "And it's as loose as anything. Did you ever see such a funny thing?"

The extreme funniness of the thing had lulled in Sophia the fear of Mr. Povey's sudden death.

"I'll see how much he's taken," said Constance, preoccupied, going to the mantelpiece.

"Why, I do believe——" Sophia began, and then stopped, glancing at the sewing-machine, which stood next to the sofa.

It was a Howe sewing-machine. It had a little tool-drawer, and in the tool-drawer was a small pair of pliers. Constance, engaged in sniffing at the lees of the potion in order to estimate its probable deadliness, heard the well-known click of the little tool-drawer, and then she saw Sophia nearing Mr. Povey's mouth with the pliers.

"Sophia!" she exclaimed, aghast. "What in the name of goodness are you doing?"

"Nothing," said Sophia.

The next instant Mr. Povey sprang up out of his laudanum dream.

"It jumps!" he muttered; and, after a reflective pause, "but it's much better." He had at any rate escaped death.

Sophia's right hand was behind her back.

Just then a hawker passed down King Street, crying mussels and cockles.

"Oh!" Sophia almost shrieked. "Do let's have mussels and cockles for tea!" And she rushed to the door, and unlocked and opened it, regardless of the risk of draughts to Mr. Povey.

In those days people often depended upon the caprices of hawkers for the tastiness of their teas; but it was an adventurous age, when errant knights of commerce were numerous and enterprising. You went on to your doorstep, caught your meal as it passed, withdrew, cooked it and ate it, quite in the manner of the early Briton.

Constance was obliged to join her sister on the top step. Sophia descended to the second step.

"Fresh mussels and cockles all alive oh!" bawled the hawker, looking across the road in the April breeze. He was the celebrated Hollins, a professional Irish drunkard, aged in iniquity, who cheerfully saluted magistrates in the street, and referred to the workhouse, which he occasionally visited, as the Bastile.

Sophia was trembling from head to foot.

"What are you laughing at, you silly thing?" Constance demanded.

Sophia surreptitiously showed the pliers, which she had partly thrust into her pocket. Between their points was a most perceptible, and even recognizable, fragment of Mr. Povey.

This was the crown of Sophia's career as a perpetrator of the unutterable.

"What!" Constance's face showed the final contortions of that horrified incredulity which is forced to believe.

Sophia nudged her violently to remind her that they were in the street, and also quite close to Mr. Povey.

"Now, my little missies," said the vile Hollins. "Three pence a pint, and how's your honoured mother to-day? Yes, fresh, so help me God!"

The two girls came up the unlighted stone staircase which led from Maggie's cave to the door of the parlour. Sophia, foremost, was carrying a large tray, and Constance a small one. Constance, who had nothing on her tray but a teapot, a bowl of steaming and balmy-scented mussels and cockles, and a plate of hot buttered toast, went directly into the parlour on the left. Sophia had in her arms the entire material and apparatus of a high tea for two, including eggs, jam, and toast (covered with the slop-basin turned upside down), but not including mussels and cockles. She turned to the right, passed along the corridor by the cutting-out room, up two steps into the sheeted and shuttered gloom of the closed shop, up the showroom stairs, through the showroom, and so into the bedroom corridor. Experience had proved it easier to make this long detour than to round the difficult corner of the parlour stairs with a large loaded tray. Sophia knocked with the edge of the tray at the door of the principal bedroom. The muffled oratorical sound from within suddenly ceased, and the door was opened by a very tall, very thin, black-bearded man, who looked down at Sophia as if to demand what she meant by such an interruption.

"I've brought the tea, Mr. Critchlow," said Sophia.

And Mr. Critchlow carefully accepted the tray.

"Is that my little Sophia?" asked a faint voice from the depths of the bedroom.

"Yes, father," said Sophia.

But she did not attempt to enter the room. Mr. Critchlow put the tray on a white-clad chest of drawers near the door, and then he shut the door, with no ceremony. Mr. Critchlow was John Baines's oldest and closest friend, though decidedly younger than the draper. He frequently "popped in" to have a word with the invalid; but Thursday afternoon was his special afternoon, consecrated by him to the service of the sick. From two o'clock precisely till eight o'clock precisely he took charge of John Baines, reigning autocratically over the bedroom. It was known that he would not tolerate invasions, nor even ambassadorial visits. No! He gave up his weekly holiday to this

business of friendship, and he must be allowed to conduct the business in his own way. Mrs. Baines herself avoided disturbing Mr. Critchlow's ministrations on her husband. She was glad to do so; for Mr. Baines was never to be left alone under any circumstances, and the convenience of being able to rely upon the presence of a staid member of the Pharmaceutical Society for six hours of a given day every week outweighed the slight affront to her prerogatives as wife and house-mistress. Mr. Critchlow was an extremely peculiar man, but when he was in the bedroom she could leave the house with an easy mind. Moreover, John Baines enjoyed these Thursday afternoons. For him, there was "none like Charles Critchlow." The two old friends experienced a sort of grim, desiccated happiness, cooped up together in the bedroom, secure from women and fools generally. How they spent the time did not seem to be certainly known, but the impression was that politics occupied them. Undoubtedly Mr. Critchlow was an extremely peculiar man. He was a man of habits. He must always have the same things for his tea. Black-currant jam, for instance. (He called it "preserve.") The idea of offering Mr. Critchlow a tea which did not comprise black-currant jam was inconceivable by the intelligence of St. Luke's Square. Thus for years past, in the fruit-preserving season, when all the house and all the shop smelt richly of fruit boiling in sugar, Mrs. Baines had filled an extra number of jars with black-currant jam, "because Mr. Critchlow wouldn't *touch* any other sort."

So Sophia, faced with the shut door of the bedroom, went down to the parlour by the shorter route. She knew that on going up again, after tea, she would find the devastated tray on the doormat.

Constance was helping Mr. Povey to mussels and cockles. And Mr. Povey still wore one of the antimacassars. It must have stuck to his shoulders when he sprang up from the sofa, woollen antimacassars being notoriously parasitic things. Sophia sat down, somewhat self-consciously. The serious Constance was also perturbed. Mr. Povey did not usually take tea in the

house on Thursday afternoons; his practice was to go out into the great, mysterious world. Never before had he shared a meal with the girls alone. The situation was indubitably unexpected, unforeseen; it was, too, piquant, and what added to its piquancy was the fact that Constance and Sophia were, somehow, responsible for Mr. Povey. They felt that they were responsible for him. They had offered the practical sympathy of two intelligent and well-trained young women, born nurses by reason of their sex, and Mr. Povey had accepted; he was now on their hands. Sophia's monstrous, sly operation in Mr. Povey's mouth did not cause either of them much alarm, Constance having apparently recovered from the first shock of it. They had discussed it in the kitchen while preparing the teas; Constance's extraordinarily severe and dictatorial tone in condemning it had led to a certain heat. But the success of the impudent wrench justified it despite any irrefutable argument to the contrary. Mr. Povey was better already, and he evidently remained in ignorance of his loss.

"Have some?" Constance asked of Sophia, with a large spoon hovering over the bowl of shells.

"Yes, *please*," said Sophia, positively.

Constance well knew that she would have some, and had only asked from sheer nervousness.

"Pass your plate, then."

Now when everybody was served with mussels, cockles, tea, and toast, and Mr. Povey had been persuaded to cut the crust off his toast, and Constance had, quite unnecessarily, warned Sophia against the deadly green stuff in the mussels, and Constance had further pointed out that the evenings were getting longer, and Mr. Povey had agreed that they were, there remained nothing to say. An irksome silence fell on them all, and no one could lift it off. Tiny clashes of shell and crockery sounded with the terrible clearness of noises heard in the night. Each person avoided the eyes of the others. And both Constance and Sophia kept straightening their bodies at intervals, and expanding their chests, and then looking at their plates; occasionally a prim

cough was discharged. It was a sad example of the difference between young women's dreams of social brilliance and the reality of life. These girls got more and more girlish, until, from being women at the administering of laudanum, they sank back to about eight years of age—perfect children—at the tea-table.

The tension was snapped by Mr. Povey. "My God!" he muttered, moved by a startling discovery to this impious and disgraceful oath (he, the pattern and exemplar—and in the presence of innocent girlhood too!). "I've swallowed it!"

"Swallowed what, Mr. Povey?" Constance inquired.

The tip of Mr. Povey's tongue made a careful voyage of inspection all round the right side of his mouth.

"Oh yes!" he said, as if solemnly accepting the inevitable. "I've swallowed it!"

Sophia's face was now scarlet; she seemed to be looking for some place to hide it. Constance could not think of anything to say.

"That tooth has been loose for two years," said Mr. Povey, "and now I've swallowed it with a mussel."

"Oh, Mr. Povey!" Constance cried in confusion, and added, "There's one good thing, it can't hurt you any more now."

"Oh!" said Mr. Povey. "It wasn't *that* tooth that was hurting me. It's an old stump at the back that's upset me so this last day or two. I wish it had been."

Sophia had her teacup close to her red face. At these words of Mr. Povey her cheeks seemed to fill out like plump apples. She dashed the cup into its saucer, spilling tea recklessly, and then ran from the room with stifled snorts.

"Sophia!" Constance protested.

"I must just——" Sophia incoherently spluttered in the doorway. "I shall be all right. Don't——"

Constance, who had risen, sat down again.

Sophia fled along the passage leading to the shop and took refuge in the cutting-out room, a room which the astonishing architect had devised upon what must have been a backyard

of one of the three constituent houses. It was lighted from its roof, and only a wooden partition, eight feet high, separated it from the passage. Here Sophia gave rein to her feelings; she laughed and cried together, weeping generously into her handkerchief and wildly giggling, in a hysteria which she could not control. The spectacle of Mr. Povey mourning for a tooth which he thought he had swallowed, but which in fact lay all the time in her pocket, seemed to her to be by far the most ridiculous, side-splitting thing that had ever happened or could happen on earth. It utterly overcame her. And when she fancied that she had exhausted and conquered its surpassing ridiculousness, this ridiculousness seized her again and rolled her anew in depths of mad, trembling laughter.

Gradually she grew calmer. She heard the parlour door open, and Constance descend the kitchen steps with a rattling tray of tea-things. Tea, then, was finished, without her! Constance did not remain in the kitchen, because the cups and saucers were left for Maggie to wash up as a fitting *coda* to Maggie's monthly holiday. The parlour door closed. And the vision of Mr. Povey in his antimacassar swept Sophia off into another convulsion of laughter and tears. Upon this the parlour door opened again, and Sophia choked herself into silence while Constance hastened along the passage. In a minute Constance returned with her woolwork, which she had got from the showroom, and the parlour received her. Not the least curiosity on the part of Constance as to what had become of Sophia!

At length Sophia, a faint meditative smile being all that was left of the storm in her, ascended slowly to the showroom, through the shop. Nothing there of interest! Thence she wandered towards the drawing-room, and encountered Mr. Critchlow's tray on the mat. She picked it up and carried it by way of the showroom and shop down to the kitchen, where she dreamily munched two pieces of toast that had cooled to the consistency of leather. She mounted the stone steps and listened at the door of the parlour. No sound! This seclusion of Mr. Povey and Constance was really very strange. She roved right round the

house, and descended creepingly by the twisted house-stairs, and listened intently at the other door of the parlour. She now detected a faint regular snore. Mr. Povey, a prey to laudanum and mussels, was sleeping while Constance worked at her fire-screen! It was now in the highest degree odd, this seclusion of Mr. Povey and Constance; unlike anything in Sophia's experience! She wanted to go into the parlour, but she could not bring herself to do so. She crept away again, forlorn and puzzled, and next discovered herself in the bedroom which she shared with Constance at the top of the house; she lay down in the dusk on the bed and began to read "The Days of Bruce"; but she read only with her eyes.

Later, she heard movements on the house-stairs, and the familiar whining creak of the door at the foot thereof. She skipped lightly to the door of the bedroom.

"Good-night, Mr. Povey. I hope you'll be able to sleep."

Constance's voice!

"It will probably come on again."

Mr. Povey's voice, pessimistic!

Then the shutting of doors. It was almost dark. She went back to the bed, expecting a visit from Constance. But a clock struck eight, and all the various phenomena connected with the departure of Mr. Critchlow occurred one after another. At the same time Maggie came home from the land of Romance. Then long silences! Constance was now immured with her father, it being her "turn" to nurse; Maggie was washing up in her cave, and Mr. Povey was lost to sight in his bedroom. Then Sophia heard her mother's lively, commanding knock on the King Street door. Dusk had definitely yielded to black night in the bedroom. Sophia dozed and dreamed. When she awoke, her ear caught the sound of knocking. She jumped up, tiptoed to the landing, and looked over the balustrade, whence she had a view of all the first-floor corridor. The gas had been lighted; through the round aperture at the top of the porcelain globe she could see the wavering flame. It was her mother, still bonneted, who was knocking at the door of Mr. Povey's room. Constance

stood in the doorway of her parents' room. Mrs. Baines knocked twice with an interval, and then said to Constance, in a resonant whisper that vibrated up the corridor—

"He seems to be fast asleep. I'd better not disturb him."

"But suppose he wants something in the night?"

"Well, child, I should hear him moving. Sleep's the best thing for him."

Mrs. Baines left Mr. Povey to the effects of laudanum, and came along the corridor. She was a stout woman, all black stuff and gold chain, and her skirt more than filled the width of the corridor. Sophia watched her habitual heavy mounting gesture as she climbed the two steps that gave variety to the corridor. At the gas-jet she paused, and, putting her hand to the tap, gazed up into the globe.

"Where's Sophia?" she demanded, her eyes fixed on the gas as she lowered the flame.

"I think she must be in bed, mother," said Constance, nonchalantly.

The returned mistress was point by point resuming knowledge and control of that complicated machine—her household.

Then Constance and her mother disappeared into the bedroom, and the door was shut with a gentle, decisive bang that to the silent watcher on the floor above seemed to create a special excluding intimacy round about the figures of Constance and her father and mother. The watcher wondered, with a little prick of jealousy, what they would be discussing in the large bedroom, her father's beard wagging feebly and his long arms on the counterpane, Constance perched at the foot of the bed, and her mother walking to and fro, putting her cameo brooch on the dressing-table or stretching creases out of her gloves. Certainly, in some subtle way, Constance had a standing with her parents which was more confidential than Sophia's.

FRANK SWINNERTON

Publisher, critic, novelist

Mr. Arnold Bennett's first impression of Mr. Swinnerton's work was that he had not "come across one single ready-made phrase." This may seem strange to those of us who have been taught to believe that a formal education is necessary for some degree of culture, but not so strange to those of us who have come to realize the possibilities of genius and perseverance. For Mr. Swinnerton had no formal education, and he did have poverty and ill health. One might give an account of his life and excusably quote a moral.

A selection from *Nocturne* is printed here, because of all Mr. Swinnerton's notable books this is perhaps the most notable. Other prominent contemporaries besides Mr. Bennett have been impressed with his work. Mr. H. G. Wells in his introduction to *Nocturne* says:

His people are not splashes of appearance, but living minds. Jenny and Emmy in this book are realities inside and out; they are imaginative creatures so complete that one can think with ease of Jenny ten years hence or of Emmy as a baby. The fickle Alf is one of the most perfect Cockneys—a type so easy to caricature and so hard to get true—in fiction. If there exists a better writing of vulgar lovemaking, so base, so honest, so touchingly mean, and so touchingly full of craving for happiness than this that we have here in the chapter called "After the Theatre," I do not know of it. Only a novelist who has had his troubles can understand fully what a dance among china cups, what a skating over thin ice, what a tight-rope performance is achieved in this astounding chapter. A false note, one fatal line, would have ruined all. On the one hand lay brutality; a hundred imitative louts could have written a similar chapter brutally, with the soul left out—we've loads of

has it any chance of living. And the real argument for good writing is that it enables the reader to experience something of the author's authentic emotion. If your students do not appreciate this, I do not think they can be taught to appreciate it. The purpose of writing is not just that the literal meaning should be clear: words should be used to convey feeling. They are so used by all prose writers of merit, and in the order of their use lies all the difference between tedium and vivid interest.

Won't you let me off the hunt for examples? It is more than I have time for.

With best wishes

Yours faithfully

Frank Swinnerton

Mrs Josephine Pacey.

Facsimile of part of the letter from Frank Swinnerton to the author printed on the following page.

such "strong stuff" and it is nothing; on the other side was the still more dreadful fall into sentimentality, the tear of conscious tenderness, the redeeming glimpse of better things in Alf or Emmy that would at one stroke have converted their reality into a genteel masquerade. The perfection of Alf and Emmy is that at no point does a "nature's gentleman" or a "nature's lady" show through and demand our refined sympathy.

"My advice to your students would be to take a piece of good English writing—from Swift or Hazlitt or H. M. Tomlinson—and ask themselves *why* the meaning is so clear, and the pleasure in reading so great. The answer lies wholly in the colour and arrangement of the words. A word is dead until it is used. Only when it is used in conjunction with other words has it any chance of living. And the real argument for good writing is that it enables the reader to experience something of the author's authentic emotion. . . . The purpose of writing is not just that the literal meaning should be clear: words should be used to convey feeling. They are so used by all prose writers of merit, and in the order of their use lies all the difference between tedium and vivid interest."

—Frank Swinnerton.

AFTER THE THEATRE [1]

I

After leaving the house Emmy and Alf pressed along in the darkness, Alf's arm still surrounding and supporting Emmy, Emmy still half jubilantly and half sorrowfully continuing to recognise her happiness and the smothered chagrin of her emotions. She was not able to feel either happy or miserable; but happiness was uppermost. Dislike of Jenny had its place, also; for she could account for every weakness of Alf's by reference to Jenny's baseness. But indeed Emmy could not think, and could only passively and excitedly endure the conflicting emotions of the moment. And Alf did not speak, but hurried her along as fast as his strong arm could secure her compliance with his own pace; and they walked through the night-ridden streets and full into the blaze of the theatre entrance without any words at all. Then, when the staring vehemence of the electric lights whitened and shadowed her face, Emmy drew away, casting down her eyes, alarmed at the disclosures which the brilliance might devastatingly make. She slipped from his arm, and stood rather forlornly while Alf fished in his pockets for the tickets. With docility she followed him, thrilled when he stepped aside in passing the commissionaire and took her arm. Together they went up the stairs, the heavy carpets with their drugget covers silencing every step, the gilded mirrors throwing their reflections backwards and forwards until the stairs seemed peopled with hosts of Emmys and Alfs. As they drew near the closed doors of the circle the hush filling the staircases and vestibules of the theatre was intensified. An aproned attendant seemed to Emmy's sensitiveness to look them up and down and superciliously to disapprove them. She moved with indignation.

[1] From *Nocturne*. Copyright 1917 by Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc.

A dull murmur, as of single voices, disturbed the air somewhere behind the rustling attendant: and when the doors were quickly opened Emmy saw beyond the darkness and the intrusive flash of light caused by the opening doors a square of brilliance and a dashing figure upon the stage talking staccato. Those of the audience who were sitting near the doors turned angrily and with curiosity to view the new-comers; and the voice that Emmy had distinguished went more stridently on, with a strong American accent. In a flurry she found and crept into her seat, trying to understand the play, to touch Alf, to remove her hat, to discipline her excitements. And the staccato voice went on and on, detailing a plan of some sort which she could not understand because they had missed the first five minutes of the play. Emmy could not tell that the actor was only pretending to be an American; she could not understand why, having spoken twenty words, he must take six paces farther from the footlights until he had spoken thirteen more; but she could and did feel most overwhelmingly exuberant at being as it were alone in that half-silent multitude, sitting beside Alf, their arms touching, her head whirling, her heart beating, and a wholly exquisite warmth flushing her cheeks.

II

The first interval found the play well advanced. A robbery had been planned—for it was a "crook" play—and the heroine had already received wild-eyed the advances of a fur-coated millionaire. When the lights of the theatre popped up, and members of the orchestra began once more unmercifully to tune their instruments, it was possible to look round at the not especially large audience. But in whichever direction Emmy looked she was always brought back as by a magnet to Alf, who sat ruminantly beside her. To Alf's side-eye Emmy was looking surprisingly lovely. The tired air and the slightly peevish mouth to which he was accustomed had given place to the flush and sparkle of an excited girl. Alf was aware of surprise. He blinked. He saw the lines smoothed away from round her

mouth—the lines of weariness and dissatisfaction,—and was tempted by the softness of her cheek. As he looked quickly off again he thought how full Jenny would have been of comment upon the play, how he would have sat grinning with precious enjoyment at her merciless gibes during the whole of the interval. He had the sense of Jenny as all movement, as flashing and drawing him into quagmires of sensation, like a will-o'-the-wisp. Emmy was not like that. She sat tremulously smiling, humble before him, diffident, flattering. She was intelligent; that was it. Intelligent was the word. Not lively, but restful. Critically he regarded her. Rather a nice girl, Emmy. . . .

Alf roused himself, and looked around.

"Here, miss!" he called; and "S-s-s-s" when she did not hear him. It was his way of summoning an attendant or a waitress. "S-s-s-s." The attendant brought chocolates, which Alf handed rather magnificently to his companion. He plunged into his pockets—in his rough-and-ready, muscular way—for the money, leaning far over the next seat, which was unoccupied. "Like some lemon?" he said to Emmy. Together they inspected the box of chocolates, which contained much imitation-lace paper and a few sweets. "Not half a sell," grumbled Alf to himself, thinking of the shilling he had paid; but he looked with gratification at Emmy's face as she enjoyingly ate the chocolates. As her excitement a little strained her nervous endurance Emmy began to pale under the eyes; her eyes seemed to grow larger; she lost the first air of sparkle, but she became more pathetic. "Poor little thing," thought Alf, feeling masculine. "Poor little thing: she's tired. Poor little thing."

III

In the middle of this hot, excitedly-talking audience they seemed to bask as in a warm pool of brilliant light. The brilliants in the dome of the theatre intensified all the shadows, heightened all the smiles, illumined all the silken blouses and silver bangles, the flashing eyes, the general air of fête.

"All right?" Alf inquired protectively. Emmy looked in gratitude towards him.

"Lovely," she said. "Have another?"

"I meant *you*," he persisted. "Yourself, I mean." Emmy smiled, so happily that nobody could have been unmoved at the knowledge of having given such pleasure.

"Oh, grand!" Emmy said. Then her eyes contracted. Memory came to her. The angry scene that had passed earlier returned to her mind, hurting her, and injuring her happiness. Alf hurried to engage her attention, to distract her from the thoughts that had in them such discomfort as she so quickly showed.

"Like the play? I didn't quite follow what it was this old general had done to him. Did you?"

"Hadn't he kept him from marrying . . ." Emmy looked conscious for a moment. "Marrying the right girl? I didn't understand it either. It's only a play."

"Of course," Alf agreed. "See how that girl's eyes shone when old fur-coat went after her? Fair shone, they did. Like lamps. They'd got the limes on her. . . . You couldn't see them. My—er-my friend's the electrician here. He says it drives him nearly crazy, the way he has to follow her about in the third act. She . . . she's got some pluck, he says; the way she fights three of them single-handed. They've all got revolvers. She's got one; but it's not loaded. Lights a cigarette, too, with them all watching her, ready to rush at her."

"There!" said Emmy, admiringly. She was thinking: "It's only a play."

"She gets hold of his fur coat, and puts it on. . . . Imitates his voice. . . . You can see it's her all the time, you know. So could they, if they looked a bit nearer. However, they don't. . . . I suppose there wouldn't be any play if they did. . . ."

Emmy was not listening to him: she was dreaming. She was as gauche and simple in his company as a young girl would have been; but her mind was different. It was practical in its dreams, and they had their disturbing unhappiness, as well, from the greater poignancy of her desire. She was not a young girl, to be

agreeably fluttered and to pass on to the next admirer without a qualm. She loved him, blindly but painfully; without the ease of young love, but with all the sickness of first love. And she had jealousy, the feeling that she was not his first object, to poison her feelings. She could not think of Jenny without tremors of anger. And still, for pain, her thoughts went throbbing on about Jenny whenever, in happiness, she had seen a home and Alf and a baby and the other plain clear consequences of earning his love—of taking him from Jenny.

And then the curtain rose, the darkness fell, and the orchestra's tune slithered into nothing. The play went on, about the crook and the general and the millionaire and the heroine and all their curiously simple-minded friends. And every moment something happened upon the stage, from fights to thefts, from kisses (which those in the gallery, not wholly absorbed by the play, generously augmented) to telephone calls, plots, speeches (many speeches, of irreproachable moral tone), shoutings, and sudden wild appeals to the delighted occupants of the gallery. And Emmy sat through it hardly heeding the uncommon events, aware of them as she would have been aware of distant shouting. Her attention was preoccupied with other matters. She had her own thoughts, serious enough in themselves. Above all, she was enjoying the thought that she was with Alf, and that their arms were touching; and she was wondering if he knew that.

IV

Through another interval they sat with silent embarrassment, the irreplaceable chocolates, which had earlier been consumed, having served their turn as a means of devouring attention. Alf was tempted to fly to the bar for a drink and composure, but he did not like to leave Emmy; and he could not think of anything which could safely be said to her in the middle of this gathering of hot and radiant persons. "To speak" in such uproar meant "to shout." He felt that every word he uttered would go echoing in rolls and rolls of sound out among

the multitude. They were not familiar enough to make that a matter of indifference to him. He was in the stage of secretiveness. And Emmy, after trying once or twice to open various small topics, had fallen back upon her own thoughts, and could invent nothing to talk about until the difficulties that lay between them had been removed. Her brow contracted. She moved her shoulders, or sat pressed reservedly against the back of her seat. Her voice, whenever she did not immediately hear some word fall from Alf, became sharp and self-conscious—almost "managing."

It was a relief to both of them, and in both the tension of sincere feeling had perceptibly slackened, when the ignored orchestra gave way before the rising curtain. Again the two drew together in the darkness, as all other couples were doing, comforted by proximity, and even by the unacknowledged mutual pleasure of it; again they watched the extraordinary happenings upon the stage. The fur coat was much used, cigarettes were lighted and flung away with prodigal recklessness, pistols were revealed—one of them was even fired into the air;—and jumping, trickling music heightened the effects of a number of strong speeches about love, and incorruptibility, and womanhood. . . . The climax was reached. In the middle of the climax, while yet the lover wooed and the villain died, the audience began to rustle, preparatory to going home. Even Emmy was influenced to the extent of discovering and beginning to adjust her hat. It was while she was pinning it, with her elbows raised, that the curtain fell. Both Emmy and Alf rose in the immediately successive re-illumination of the theatre; and Emmy looked so pretty with her arms up, and with the new hat so coquettishly askew upon her head, and with a long hat-pin between her teeth, that Alf could not resist the impulse to put his arm affectionately round her in leading the way out.

V

And then, once in the street, he made no scruple about taking Emmy's arm within the crook of his as they moved from

the staring whiteness of the theatre lamps out into the calmer moonshine. It was eleven o'clock. The night was fine, and the moon rode high above amid the twinkling stars. When Alf looked at Emmy's face it was transfigured in this beautiful light, and he drew her gently from the direct way back to the little house.

"Don't let's go straight back," he said. "Stroll ull do us good."

Very readily Emmy obeyed his guidance. Her heart was throbbing; but her brain was clear. He wanted to be with her; and the knowledge of that made Emmy happier than she had been since early childhood.

"It's been lovely," she said, with real warmth of gratitude, looking away from him with shyness.

"Em," growled Alf, in a voice of some confusion. "Er . . . you don't go much to the theatre, do you?"

"Not much," Emmy agreed. "See, there's Pa. He always looks to me. . . ."

"Yes." Alf could not add anything to that for a long time. "Fine night," he presently recorded. "D'you like a walk? I mean . . . I'm very fond of it, a night like this. Mr. Blanchard's all right, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes. *She's* there." Emmy could not bring herself to name Jenny to him. Yet her mind was busy thinking of the earlier jar, recomposing the details, recalling the words that had passed. Memory brought tears into her eyes; but she would not allow Alf to see them, and soon she recovered her self-control. It had to be spoken of: the evening could not pass without reference to it; or it would spoil everything. Alf would think of her—he was bound to think of her—as a crying, petulant, jealous woman, to whom he had been merely kind. Patronizing, even! Perhaps, even, the remembrance of it would prevent him from coming again to the house. Men like Alf were so funny in that respect. It took so little to displease them, to drive them away altogether. At last she ventured: "It was nice of you to take me."

Alf fidgeted, jerking his head, and looking recklessly about him.

"Not at all," he grumbled. "Not tired, are you?" Emmy reassured him. "What I mean, I'm very glad. . . . Now, look here, Em. May as well have it out. . . ." Emmy's heart gave a bound: she walked mechanically beside him, her head as stiffly held as though the muscles of her neck had been paralysed. "May as well, er . . . have it out," repeated Alf. "That's how I am—I like to be all shipshape from the start. When I came along this evening I *did* mean to ask young Jen to go with me. That was quite as you thought. I never thought you'd, you know, *care* to come with me. I don't know why; but there it is. I never meant to put it like I did . . . in that way . . . to have a fuss and upset anybody. I've . . . I mean, she's been out with me half-a-dozen times; and so I sort of naturally thought of her."

"Of course," agreed Emmy. "Of course."

"But I'm glad you came," Alf said. Something in his honesty, and the brusqueness of his rejoicing, touched Emmy, and healed her first wound—the thought that she might have been unwelcome to him. They went on a little way, more at ease; both ready for the next step in intimacy which was bound to be taken by one of them.

"I thought she might have said something to you—about me not *wanting* to come," Emmy proceeded, tentatively. "Made you think I never wanted to go out."

Alf shook his head. Emmy had there no opening for her resentment.

"No," he said, with stubborn loyalty. "She's always talked very nice about you."

"What does she say?" swiftly demanded Emmy.

"I forget. . . . Saying you had a rough time at home. Saying it was rough on you. That you're one of the best . . ."

"*She* said that?" gasped Emmy. "It's not like her to say that. Did she really? She's so touchy about me, generally. Sometimes, the way she goes on, anybody'd think I was the

miserablest creature in the world, and always on at her about something. I'm not, you know; only she thinks it. Well, I can't help it, can I? If you knew how I have to work in that house, you'd be . . . surprised. I'm always at it. The way the dirt comes in—you'd wonder where it all came from! And see, there's Pa and all. She doesn't take that into account. She gets on all right with him; but she isn't there all day, like I am. That makes a difference, you know. He's used to me. She's more of a change for him."

Alf was cordial in agreement. He was seeing all the difference between the sisters. In his heart there still lingered a sort of cherished enjoyment of Jenny's greater spirit. Secretly it delighted him, like a forbidden joke. He felt that Jenny—for all that he must not, at this moment, mention her name—kept him on the alert all the time, so that he was ever in hazardous pursuit. There was something fascinating in such excitement as she caused him. He never knew what she would do or say next; and while that disturbed and distressed him it also lacerated his vanity and provoked his admiration. He admired Jenny more than he could ever admire Emmy. But he also saw Emmy as different from his old idea of her. He had seen her trembling defiance early in the evening, and that had moved him and made him a little afraid of her; he had also seen her flushed cheeks at the theatre, and Emmy had grown in his eyes suddenly younger. He could not have imagined her so cordial, so youthful, so interested in everything that met her gaze. Finally, he found her quieter, more amenable, more truly wifely than her sister. It was an important point in Alf's eyes. You had to take into account—if you were a man of common sense—relative circumstances. Devil was all very well in courtship; but mischief in a girl became contrariness in a domestic termagant. That was an idea that was very much in Alf's thoughts during this walk, and it lingered there like acquired wisdom.

"Say she's going with a sailor?" he suddenly demanded.

"So she told me. I've never seen him. She doesn't tell lies, though."

"I thought you said she did!"

Emmy flinched: she had forgotten the words spoken in her wild anger, and would have been ashamed to account for them in a moment of greater coolness.

"I mean, if she says he's a sailor, that's true. She told me he was on a ship. I suppose she met him when she was away that time. She's been very funny ever since. Not funny—restless. Anything I've done for her she's made a fuss. I give her a thorough good meal; and oh! there's such a fuss about it. 'Why don't we have ice creams, and merangs, and wine, and grouse, and sturgeon—'"

"Ph! silly talk!" said Alf, in contemptuous wonder. "I mean to say . . ."

"Oh, well: you know what flighty girls are. He's probably a swank-pot. A stewart, or something of that sort. I expect he has what's left over, and talks big about it. But she's got ideas like that in her head, and she thinks she's too good for the likes of us. It's too much trouble to her to be pelite these days. I've got the fair sick of it, I can tell you. And then she's always out. . . . *Somebody's* got to be at home, just to look after Pa and keep the fire in. But Jenny—oh dear no! She's no sooner home than she's out again. Can't rest. Says it's stuffy indoors, and off she goes. I don't see her for hours. Well, I don't know . . . but if she doesn't quiet down a bit she'll only be making trouble for herself later on. She can't keep house, you know! She can scrub; but she can't cook so very well, or keep the place nice. She hasn't got the patience. You think she's doing the dusting; and you find her groaning about what she'd do if she was rich. 'Yes,' I tell her; 'it's all very well to do that; but you'd far better be doing something *useful*,' I say. 'Instead of wasting your time on idle fancies.'"

"Very sensible," agreed Alf, completely absorbed in such a discourse.

"She's trying, you know. You can't leave her for a minute. She says I'm stodgy; but I say it's better to be practical than flighty. Don't you think so, Alf?"

"Exackly!" said Alf, in a tone of the gravest assent. "Exackly."

VI

"I mean," pursued Emmy, "You must have a *little* commonsense. But she's been spoilt—she's the youngest. I'm a little older than she is . . . *wiser*, I say; but she won't have it. . . . And Pa's always made a fuss of her. Really, sometimes, you'd have thought she was a boy. Racing about! My word, such a commotion! And then going out to the millinery, and getting among a lot of other girls. You don't know *who* they are—if they're ladies or not. It's not a good influence for her . . ."

"She ought to get out of it," Alf said. To Emmy it was a ghastly moment.

"She'll never give it up," she hurriedly said. "You know, it's in her blood. Off she goes! And they make a fuss of her. She mimics everybody, and they laugh at it—they think it's funny to mimic people who can't help themselves—if they *are* a bit comic. So she goes; and when she does come home Pa's so glad to see a fresh face that he makes a fuss of her, too. And she stuffs him up with all sorts of tales—things that never happened—to keep him quiet. She says it gives him something to think about. . . . Well, I suppose it does. I expect you think I'm very unkind to say such things about my own sister; but really I can't help seeing what's under my nose; and I sometimes get so—you know, worked up, that I don't know how to hold myself. She doesn't understand what it is to be cooped up indoors all day long, like I am; and it never occurs to her to say 'Go along, Em; you run out for a bit.' I have to say to her: 'You be in for a bit, Jen?' and then she p'tends she's always in. And then there's a rumpus. . . ."

Alf was altogether subdued by this account: it had that degree of intimacy which, when one is in a sentimental mood, will always be absorbing. He felt that he really was getting to the bottom of the mystery known to him as Jenny Blanchard. The picture had verisimilitude. He could see Jenny as he listened. He was seeing her with the close and searching eye of a sister, as nearly true, he thought, as any vision could be. Once the

thought "I expect there's another story" came sidling into his head; but it was quickly drowned in further reminiscence from Emmy, so that it was clearly a dying desire that he felt for Jenny. Had Jenny been there, to fling her gage into the field, Alf might gapingly have followed her, lost again in admiration of her more sparkling tongue and equipments. But in such circumstances the arraigned party is never present. If Jenny had been there the tale could not have been told. Emmy's virtuous and destructive monologue would not merely have been interrupted: it would have been impossible. Jenny would have done all the talking. The others, all amaze, would have listened with feelings appropriate to each, though with feelings in common unpleasant to be borne.

"I bet there's a rumpus," Alf agreed. "Old Jen's not one to take a blow. She ups and gets in the first one." He couldn't help admiring Jenny, even yet. So he hastened to pretend that he did not admire her; out of a kind of tact. "But of course . . . that's all very well for a bit of sport, but it gets a bit wearisome after a time. I know what you mean. . . ."

"Don't think I've been complaining about her," Emmy said. "I wouldn't. Really, I wouldn't. Only I do think sometimes it's not quite fair that she should have all the fun, and me none of it. I don't want a lot. My tastes are very simple. But when it comes to none at all—well, Alf, what do *you* think?"

"It's a bit thick," admitted Alf. "And that's a fact."

"See, she's always having her own way. Does just what she likes. There's no holding her."

"Wants a man to do that," ruminated Alf, with a half chuckle. "Eh?"

"Well," said Emmy, a little brusquely. "I pity the man who tries it on."

VII

Emmy was not deliberately trying to secure from Alf a proposal of marriage. She was trying to show him the contrast between Jenny and herself, and to readjust the balances as he

appeared to have been holding them. She wanted to impress him. She was as innocent of any other intention as any girl could have been. It was jealousy that spoke; not scheme. And she was perfectly sincere in her depreciation of Jenny. She could not understand what it was that made the admiring look come into the faces of those who spoke to Jenny, nor why the unwilling admiration that started into her own heart should ever find a place there. She was baffled by character, and she was engaged in the common task of rearranging life to suit her own temperament.

They had been walking for some little distance now along deserted streets, the moon shining upon them, their steps softly echoing, and Emmy's arm as warm as toast. It was like a real lovers' walk, she could not help thinking, half in the shadow and wholly in the stillness of the quiet streets. She felt very contented; and with her long account of Jenny already uttered, and her tough body already reanimated by the walk, Emmy was at leisure to let her mind wander among sweeter things. There was love, for example, to think about; and when she glanced sideways Alf's shoulder seemed such a little distance from her cheek. And his hand was lightly clasping her wrist. A strong hand, was Alf's, with a broad thumb and big capable fingers. She could see it in the moonlight, and she had suddenly an extraordinary longing to press her cheek against the back of Alf's hand. She did not want any silly nonsense, she told herself; and the tears came into her eyes, and her nose seemed pinched and tickling with the cold at the mere idea of any nonsense; but she could not help longing with the most intense longing to press her cheek against the back of Alf's hand. That was all. She wanted nothing more. But that desire thrilled her. She felt that if it might be granted she would be content, altogether happy. She wanted so little!

And as if Alf too had been thinking of somebody nearer to him than Jenny, he began:

"I don't know if you've ever thought at all about me, Em. But your saying what you've done . . . about yourself . . . it's made me think a bit. I'm all on my own now—have been for

years; but the way I live isn't good for anyone. It's a fact it's not. I mean to say, my rooms that I've got . . . they're not big enough to swing a cat in; and the way the old girl at my place serves up the meals is a fair knock-out, if you notice things like I do. If I think of her, and then about the way you do things, it gives me the hump. Everything you do's so nice. But with her—the plates have still got bits of yesterday's mustard on them, and all fluffy from the dishcloth. . . ."

"Not washed prop'ly," Emmy interestedly remarked; "that's what that is."

"Exackly. And the meat's raw inside. Cooks it too quickly. And when I have a bloater for my breakfast—I'm partial to a bloater—it's black outside, as if it was done in the cinders; and then inside—well, I like them done all through, like any other man. Then I can't get her to get me gammon rashers. She will get these little tiddy rashers, with little white bones in them. Why, while you're cutting them out the bacon gets cold. You may think I'm fussy . . . fiddly with my food. I'm not, really; only I like it . . ."

"Of course you do," Emmy said. "She's not interested, that's what it is. She thinks anything's food; and some people don't mind at all what they eat. They don't notice."

"No. I *do*. If you go to a restaurant you get it different. You get more of it, too. Well, what with one thing and another I've got very fed up with Madam Bucks. It's all dirty and half baked. There's great holes in the carpet of my sitting-room—holes you could put your foot through. And I've done that, as a matter of fact. Put my foot through and nearly gone over. *Should* have done that, only for the table. Well, I mean to say . . . you can't help being fed up with it. But she knows where I work, and I know she's hard up; so I don't like to go anywhere else, because if anybody asked me if he should go there, I couldn't honestly recommend him to; and yet, you see how it is, I shouldn't like to leave her in the lurch, if she knew I was just gone somewhere else down the street."

"No," sympathetically agreed Emmy. "I quite see. It's

very awkward for you. Though it's no use being too kind-hearted with these people; because they *don't* appreciate it; and if you don't say anything they just go on in the same way, never troubling themselves about you. They think, as long as you don't say anything you're all right; and it's not their place to make any alteration. They're quite satisfied. Look at Jenny and me."

"Is she satisfied?" asked Alf.

"With herself, she is. She's never satisfied with me. She never tries to see it from my point of view."

"No," Alf nodded his head wisely. "That's what it is. They don't." He nodded again.

"Isn't it a lovely night," ventured Emmy. "See the moon over there."

They looked up at the moon and the stars and the unfathomable sky. It took them at once away from the streets and the subject of their talk. Both sighed as they stared upwards, lost in the beauty before them. And when at last their eyes dropped, the street lamps had become so yellow and tawdry that they were like stupid spangles in contrast with the stars. Alf still held Emmy's arm so snugly within his own, and her wrist was within the clasp of his fingers. It was so little a thing to slide his fingers into a firm clasp of her hand, and they drew closer.

"Lovely, eh!" Alf ejaculated, with a further upward lift of his eyes. Emmy sighed again.

"Not like down here," she soberly said.

"No, it's different. Down here's all right, though," Alf assured her. "Don't you think it is ?" He gave a rather nervous little half laugh. "Don't you think it is?"

"Grand!" Emmy agreed, with the slightest hint of dryness.

"I say, it was awfully good of you to come to-night," said Alf. "I've . . . you've enjoyed it, haven't you?" He was looking sharply at her, and Emmy's face was illumined. He saw her soft cheeks, her thin soft little neck; he felt her warm gloved hand within his own. "D'you mind?" he asked, and bent abruptly so that their faces were close together. For a moment,

feeling so daring that his breath caught, Alf could not carry out his threat. Then, roughly, he pushed his face against hers, kissing her. Quickly he released Emmy's arm, so that his own might be more protectingly employed; and they stood embraced in the moonlight.

VIII

It was only for a minute, for Emmy, with instinctive secrecy, drew away into the shadow. At first Alf did not understand, and thought himself repelled; but Emmy's hands were invitingly raised. The first delight was broken. One more sensitive might have found it hard to recapture; but Alf stepped quickly to her side in the shadow, and they kissed again. He was surprised at her passion. He had not expected it, and the flattery was welcome. He grinned a little in the safe darkness, consciously and even sheepishly, but with eagerness. They were both clumsy and a little trembling, not very practised lovers, but curious and excited. Emmy felt her hat knocked a little sideways upon her head.

It was Emmy who moved first, drawing herself away from him, she knew not why.

"Where you going?" asked Alf, detaining her. "What is it? Too rough, am I?" He could not see Emmy's shaken head, and was for a moment puzzled at the ways of woman—so far from his grasp.

"No," Emmy said. "It's wonderful."

Peering closely, Alf could see her eyes shining.

"D'you think you're fond enough of me, Emmy?" She demurred.

"That's a nice thing to say! As if it was for me to tell you!" she whispered archly back.

"What ought I to say? I'm not . . . mean to say, I don't know how to say things, Emmy. You'll have to put up with my rough ways. Give us a kiss, old sport."

"How many more! You *are* a one!" Emmy was not pliant enough. In her voice there was the faintest touch of—something

that was not self-consciousness, that was perhaps a sense of failure. Perhaps she was back again suddenly into her maturity, finding it somehow ridiculous to be kissed and to kiss with such abandon. Alf was not baffled, however. As she withdrew he advanced, so that his knuckle rubbed against the brick wall to which Emmy had retreated.

"I say," he cried sharply. "Here's the wall."

"Hurt yourself?" Emmy quickly caught his hand and raised it, examining the knuckle. The skin might have been roughened; but no blood was drawn. Painfully, exultingly, her dream realised, she pressed her cheek against the back of his hand.

IX

"What's that for?" demanded Alf.

"Nothing. Never you mind. I wanted to do it." Emmy's cheeks were hot as she spoke; but Alf marvelled at the action, and at her confession of such an impulse.

"How long had you . . . wanted to do it?"

"Mind your own business. The idea! Don't you know better than that?" Emmy asked. It made him chuckle delightedly to have such a retort from her. And it stimulated his curiosity.

"I believe you're a bit fond of me," he said. "I don't see why. There's nothing about me to write home about, I shouldn't think. But there it is: love's a wonderful thing."

"Is it?" asked Emma, distantly. Why couldn't he say he loved her? Too proud, was he? Or was he shy? He had only used the word "love" once, and that was in this general sense—as though there *was* such a thing. Emmy was shy of the word, too; but not as shy as that. She was for a moment anxious, because she wanted him to say the word, or some equivalent. If it was not said, she was dependent upon his charity later, and would cry sleeplessly at night for want of sureness of him.

"D'you love me?" she suddenly said. Alf whistled. He seemed for that instant to be quite taken aback by her inquiry. "There's no harm in me asking, I suppose." Into Emmy's voice there came a thread of roughness.

"No harm at all," Alf politely said. "Not at all." He continued to hesitate.

"Well?" Emmy waited, still in his arms, her ears alert.

"We're engaged, aren't we?" Alf muttered shamefacedly. "Erum . . . what sort of ring would you like? I don't say you'll get it . . . and it's too late to go and choose one tonight." Emmy flushed again; he felt her tremble.

"You *are* in a hurry," she said, too much moved for her archness to take effect.

"Yes, I am." Alf's quick answer was reassuring enough. Emmy's heart was eased. She drew him nearer with her arms about his neck, and they kissed again.

"I wish you'd say you love me," she whispered. "Mean such a lot to me."

"No!" cried Alf incredulously. "Really?"

"Do you?"

"I'll think about it. Do you—me?"

"Yes. I don't mind saying it if you will."

Alf gave a little whistle to himself, half under his breath. He looked carefully to right and left, and up at the house-wall against which they were standing. Nobody seemed to be in danger of making him feel an abject fool by overhearing such a confession as he was invited to make; and yet it was such a terrible matter. He was confronted with a difficulty of difficulties. He looked at Emmy, and knew that she was waiting, entreating him with her shining eyes.

"Er," said Alf, reluctantly and with misgiving. "Er . . . well, I suppose I . . . a . . . suppose I do. . . ."

Emmy gave a little cry, that was half a smothered laugh of happiness at her triumph. It was not bad! She had made him admit it on the first evening. Later, when she was more at ease, he should be more explicit.

X

"Well," said Alf, instantly regretting his admission, and inclined to bluster. "Now, I suppose you're satisfied?"

"Awfully!" breathed Emmy. "You're a dear good soul. You're splendid, Alf!"

For a few minutes more they remained in that benign, unforgettable shadow; and then, very slowly, with Alf's arm about Emmy's waist, and Emmy's shoulder so confidingly against his breast, they began to return homewards. Both spoke very subduedly, and tried to keep their shoes from too loudly striking the pavement as they walked; and the wandering wind came upon them in glee round every corner and rustled like a busybody among all the consumptive bushes in the front gardens they passed. Sounds carried far. A long way away they heard the tramcars grinding along the main road. But here all was hush, and the beating of two hearts in unison; and to both of them happiness lay ahead. Their aims were similar, in no point jarring or divergent. Both wanted a home, and loving labour, and quiet evenings of pleasant occupation. To both the daily work came with regularity, not as an intrusion or a wrong to manhood and womanhood; it was inevitable, and was regarded as inevitable. Neither Emmy nor Alf ever wondered why they should be working hard when the sun shone and the day was fine. Neither compared the lot accorded by station with an ideal fortune of blessed ease. They were not temperamentally restless. They both thought, with a practical sense that is as convenient as it is generally accepted, "somebody must do the work: may as well be me." No discontent would be theirs. And Alf was a good worker at the bench, a sober and honest man; and Emmy could make a pound go as far as any other woman in Kennington Park. They had before them a faithful future of work in common, of ideals (workaday ideals) in common; and at this instant they were both marvellously content with the immediate outlook. Not for them to change the order of the world.

"I feel it's so suitable," Emmy startlingly said, in a hushed tone, as they walked. "Your . . . you know . . . 'supposing you do' . . . me; and me . . . doing the same for you."

Alf looked solemnly round at her. His Emmy skittish? It

was not what he had thought. Still, it diverted him; and he ambled in pursuit.

"Yes," he darkly said. "What do you 'suppose you do' for me?"

"Why, love you," Emmy hurried to explain, trapping herself by speed into the use of the tabooed word. "Didn't you know? Though it seems funny to say it like that. It's so new. I've never dared to . . . you know . . . say it. I mean we're both of us quiet, and reliable . . . we're not either of us flighty, I mean. That's why I think we suit each other—better than if we'd been different. Not like we are."

"I'm sure we do," Alf said.

"Not like some people. You can't help wondering to yourself however they came to get married. They seem so unlike. Don't they! It's funny. Ah, well, love's a wonderful thing—as you say!" She turned archly to him, encouragingly.

"You seem happy," remarked Alf, in a critical tone. But he was not offended; only tingled into desire for her by the strange gleam of merriment crossing her natural seriousness, the jubilant note of happy consciousness that the evening's love-making had bred. Alf drew her more closely to his side, increasingly sure that he had done well. She was beginning to intrigue him. With an emotion that startled himself as much as it delighted Emmy, he said thickly in her ear, "D'you love me . . . like this?"

XI

They neared the road in which the Blanchards lived: Emmy began to press forward as Alf seemed inclined to loiter. In the neighborhood the church that had struck eight as they left the house began once more to record an hour.

"By George!" cried Alf. "Twelve . . . Midnight!" They could feel the day pass.

They were at the corner, beside the little chandler's shop which advertised to the moon its varieties of tea; and Alf paused once again.

"Half a tick," he said. "No hurry, is there?"

"You'll come in for a bit of supper," Emmy urged. Then, plumbing his hesitation, she went on, in a voice that had steel somewhere in its depths. "They'll both be gone to bed. She won't be there."

"Oh, I wasn't thinking of that," Alf declared, with unconvincing nonchalance.

"I'll give you a drop of Pa's beer," Emmy said drily.

She took out a key, and held it up for his inspection.

"I say!" Alf pretended to be surprised at the sight of a key.

"Quite a big girl, aren't I! Well, you see: there are two, and Pa never goes out. So we have one each. Saves a lot of bother." As she spoke Emmy was unlocking the door and entering the house. "See, you can have supper with me, and then it won't seem so far to walk home. And you can throw Madame Bucks's rinds at the back of the fire. You'll like that; and so will she."

Alf, now perfectly docile, and even thrilled with pleasure at the idea of being with her for a little while longer, followed Emmy into the passage, where the flickering gas showed too feeble a light to be of any service to them. Between the two walls they felt their way into the house, and Alf softly closed the door.

"Hang your hat and coat on the stand," whispered Emmy, and went tiptoeing forward to the kitchen. It was in darkness. "Oo, she is a monkey! She's let the fire out," Emmy continued, in the same whisper. "Have you got a match? The gas is out." She opened the kitchen door wide, and stood there taking off her hat, while Alf fumbled his way along the passage. "Be quick," she said.

Alf pretended not to be able to find the matches, so that he might give her a hearty kiss in the darkness. He was laughing to himself because he had only succeeded, in his random venture, in kissing her chin; and then, when she broke away with a smothered protest and a half laugh, he put his hand in his pocket again for the match-box. The first match fizzed along the box as it was struck, and immediately went out.

"Oh, *do* hurry up!" cried Emmy in a whisper, thinking he was still sporting with her. "Don't keep on larking about, Alf!"

"I'm not!" indignantly answered the delinquent. "It wouldn't strike. Half a tick!"

He moved forward in the darkness, to be nearer the gas; and as he took the step his foot caught against something on the floor. He exclaimed.

"Now what is it?" demanded Emmy. For answer Alf struck his match, and they both looked at the floor by Alf's feet. Emmy gave a startled cry and dropped to her knees.

"Hul-lo!" said Alf; and with his lighted match raised he moved to the gas, stepping, as he did so, over the body of Pa Blanchard, which was lying at full length across the kitchen floor.

H. G. WELLS

Novelist, critic

Mr. H. G. Wells (the initials seem inseparable from his surname) has had a life of varied experiences that have helped to furnish character and background for his novels. Mr. Wells is mostly self-educated. He has held many different positions as a salesman, an assistant master in a grammar school, and a journalist. For many years he has devoted all his time to writing. Mr. Wells is known as a "propagandist," because, in his critical work and in his novels, he nearly always has some definite principle in which he firmly believes and which he wants his reading public to see and believe in, too.

The hero of *Tono-Bungay* is an English "Babbitt" who realizes the profits to be gained by dishonest advertising, but does not take into account the possible consequences if he is discovered. The book, however, means much more than that.

TONO-BUNGAY [1]

A Run Down the Thames

I have thought much of that bright afternoon's panorama. To run down the Thames so is to run one's hand over the pages in the book of England from end to end. One begins in Craven Reach and it is as if one were in the heart of old New England. Behind us are Kew and Hampton Court with their memories of Kings and Cardinals, and one runs at first between Fulham's episcopal garden parties and Hurlingham's playground for the sporting instinct of our race. The whole effect is English. There is space, there are old trees and all the best qualities of the home-land in that upper reach. Putney, too, looks Anglican on a dwindling scale. And then for a stretch the newer developments slop over, one misses Bladesover and there come first squalid stretches of mean homes right and left and then the dingy industrialism of the south side, and on the north bank the polite long front of nice houses, artistic, literary, administrative people's residences, that stretches from Cheyne Walk nearly to Westminster and hides a wilderness of slums. What a long slow crescendo that is, mile after mile, with the houses crowding closelier, the multiplying succession of church towers, the architectural moments, the successive bridges, until you come out into the second movement of the piece with Lambeth's old palace under your quarter and the houses of Parliament on your bow! Westminster Bridge is ahead of you then, and through it you flash, and in a moment the round-faced clock tower cranes up to peer at you again and New Scotland Yard squares at you, a fat beef-eater of a policeman disguised miraculously as a Bastille.

[1] From *Tono-Bungay*. Reprinted by permission of the author.

For a stretch you have the essential London; you have Charing Cross railway station, heart of the world, and the Embankment on the north side with its new hotels overshadowing its Georgian and Victorian architecture, and mud and great warehouses and factories, chimneys, shot towers, advertisements on the south. The northward skyline grows more intricate and pleasing, and more and more does one thank God for Wren. Somerset House is as picturesque as the civil war, one is reminded again of the original England, one feels in the fretted sky the quality of Restoration lace. . . .

And then come Astor's strong box and the lawyers' Inns. . . .

Through that central essential London reach I drove, and X2 bored her nose under the foam regardless of it all like a black hound going through reeds—on what trail even I who made her cannot tell.

And in this reach, too, one first meets the seagulls and is reminded of the sea. Blackfriars one takes—just under these two bridges and just between them is the finest bridge moment in the world—and behold, soaring up, hanging in the sky over a rude tumult of warehouses, over a jostling competition of traders, irrelevantly beautiful and altogether remote, Saint Paul's! "Of course!" one says, "Saint Paul's!" It is the very figure of whatever fineness the old Anglican culture achieved, detached, a more dignified and chastened Saint Peter's, colder, greyer, but still ornate; it has never been overthrown, never disavowed, only the tall warehouses and all the roar of traffic have forgotten it, every one has forgotten it, the steamships, the barges, go heedlessly by regardless of it, intricacies of telephone wires and poles cut blackly into its thin mysteries, and presently, when in a moment the traffic permits you and you look round for it, it has dissolved like a cloud into the grey blues of the London sky.

And then the traditional and ostensible England falls from you altogether. The third movement begins, the last great movement in the London symphony, in which the trim scheme of the old order is altogether dwarfed and swallowed up. Comes Lon-

don Bridge, and the great warehouses tower up about you, waving stupendous cranes, the gulls circle and scream in your ears, large ships lie among their lighters, and one is in the port of the world. Again and again in this book I have written of England as a feudal scheme overtaken by fatty degeneration and stupendous accidents of hypertrophy. For the last time I must strike that note as the memory of the dear neat little sunlit ancient Tower of London lying away in a gap among the warehouses comes back to me, that little accumulation of buildings so provincially pleasant and dignified, overshadowed by the vulgarest, most typical exploit of modern England, the sham Gothic casing to the ironwork of the Tower Bridge. That Tower Bridge is the very balance and confirmation of Westminster's dull pinnacles and tower. That sham Gothic bridge; in the very gates of our mother of change, the Sea!

But after that one is in a world of accident and nature. For the third part of the panorama of London is beyond all law, order, and precedence; it is the seaport and the sea. One goes down the widening reaches through a monstrous variety of shipping, great steamers, great sailing-ships, trailing the flags of all the world, a monstrous confusion of lighters, witches' conferences of brown-sailed barges, wallowing tugs, a tumultuous crowding and jostling of cranes and spars, and wharves and stores, and assertive inscriptions. Huge vistas of dock open right and left of one, and here and there beyond and amidst it all are church towers, little patches of indescribably old-fashioned and worn-out houses, riverside pubs and the like, vestiges of townships that were long since torn to fragments and submerged in these new growths. And amidst it all no plan appears, no intention, no comprehensive desire. That is the very key of it all. Each day one feels that the pressure of commerce and traffic grew, grew insensibly monstrous, and first this man made a wharf and that erected a crane, and then this company set to work and then that, and so they jostled together to make this unassimilable enormity of traffic. Through it we dodged and drove, eager for the high seas.

I remember how I laughed aloud at the glimpse of the name of a London County Council steamboat that ran across me. *Caxton* it was called, and another was *Pepys*, and another was *Shakespeare*. They seemed so wildly out of place, splashing about in that confusion. One wanted to take them out and wipe them and put them back in some English gentleman's library. Everything was alive about them, flashing, splashing, and passing, ships moving, tugs panting, hawsers taut, barges going down with men toiling at the sweeps, the water all aswirl with the wash of shipping, scaling into millions of little wavelets, curling and frothing under the whip of unceasing wind. Past it all we drove. And at Greenwich to the south, you know, there stands a fine stone frontage where all the victories are recorded in a Painted Hall, and beside it is the "Ship" where once upon a time those gentlemen of Westminster used to have an annual dinner—before the port of London got too much for them altogether. The old façade of the Hospital was just warming to the sunset as we went by, and after that, right and left, the river opened, the sense of the sea increased and prevailed, reach after reach from Northfleet to the Nore.

And out you come at last with the sun behind you into the eastern sea. You speed up and tear the oily water louder and faster, siroo, siroo—swish—siroo, and the hills of Kent—over which I once fled from the Christian teachings of Nicodemus Frapp—fall away on the right hand and Essex on the left. They fall away and vanish into blue haze, and the tall slow ships behind the tugs, scarce moving ships and wallowing sturdy tugs, are all wrought of wet gold as one goes frothing by. They stand out, bound on strange missions of life and death, to the killing of men in unfamiliar lands. And now behind us is blue mystery and phantom flash of unseen lights, and presently even these are gone, and I and my destroyer tear out to the unknown across a great grey space. We tear into the great spaces of the future and the turbines fall to talking in unfamiliar tongues. Out to the open we go, to windy freedom and trackless ways. Light after light goes down. England and the Kingdom, Britain and the

Empire, the old prides and the old devotions, glide abeam, astern, sink down upon the horizon, pass—pass. The river passes—London passes, England passes. . . .(—*Pages 453 to 458.*)

Uncle Teddy

I thought of my uncle as Teddy directly I saw him; there was something in his personal appearance that in the light of that memory phrased itself at once as Teddiness—a certain Teddidity. To describe it in any other terms is more difficult. It is nimbleness without grace, and alertness without intelligence. He whisked out of his shop upon the pavement, a short figure in grey and wearing grey carpet slippers; one had a sense of a young fattish face behind gilt glasses, wiry hair that stuck up and forward over the forehead, an irregular nose that had its aquiline moments, and that the body betrayed an equatorial laxity, an incipient "bow window" as the image goes. He jerked out of the shop, came to a stand on the pavement outside, regarded something in the window with infinite appreciation, stroked his chin, and, as abruptly, shot sideways into the door again, charging through it as it were behind an extended hand. (—*Pages 57 and 58.*)

As a Child Saw Them

I remember these women as immense. No doubt they were of negotiable size, but I was only a very little chap and they have assumed nightmare proportions in my mind. They loomed, they bulged, they impended. Mrs. Mackridge was large and dark; there was a marvel about her head, inasmuch as she was bald. She wore a dignified cap, and in front of that upon her brow, hair was painted. I have never seen the like since. She had been maid to the widow of Sir Roderick Blenderhasset Impey, some sort of governor or such-like portent in the East Indies, and from her remains—in Mrs. Mackridge—I judge Lady Impey was a very stupendous and crushing creature indeed. Lady Impey had been of the Juno type, haughty, unapproachable, given to irony and a caustic wit. Mrs. Mack-

ridge had no wit, but she had acquired the caustic voice and gestures along with the old satins and trimmings of the great lady. When she told you it was a fine morning, she seemed also to be telling you you were a fool and a low fool to boot; when she was spoken to, she had a way of acknowledging your poor tinkle of utterance with a voluminous, scornful "Haw!" that made you want to burn her alive. She also had a way of saying "Indade!" with a droop of the eyelids.

Mrs. Booch was a smaller woman, brown haired, with queer little curls on either side of her face, large blue eyes and a small set of stereotyped remarks that constituted her entire mental range. Mrs. Latude-Fernay has left, oddly enough, no memory at all except her name and the effect of a green-grey silk dress, all set with gold and blue buttons. I fancy she was a large blonde. Then there was Miss Fison, the maid who served both Lady Drew and Miss Somerville, and at the end of the table opposite my mother sat Rabbits the butler. Rabbits, for a butler, was an unassuming man, and at tea he was not as you know butlers, but in a morning coat and a black tie with blue spots. Still, he was large, with side whiskers, even if his cleanshaven mouth was weak and little. I sat among these people on a high, hard, early Gregorian chair, trying to exist, like a feeble seedling amidst great rocks, and my mother sat with an eye upon me, resolute to suppress the slightest manifestation of vitality. It was hard on me, but perhaps it was also hard upon these rather over-fed, ageing, pretending people, that my youthful restlessness and rebellious unbelieving eyes should be thrust in among their dignities.—(*Pages 17 to 19.*)

HUGH WALPOLE

Novelist

While Mr. Walpole was an undergraduate at Cambridge, he wrote two novels; but if persistency and determination had not been his, he would never have become a distinguished English novelist; for, by way of a bad beginning, he destroyed one of the novels and a few years later handed the other to a friend who said, "Whatever else you are fitted for you are not fitted to be a novelist." However, one who had already "arrived" read it and liked it; and Mr. Walpole, encouraged and with a little money in his pocket, went to London to write book reviews and work for the newspapers.

During the war, he was with the Red Cross on the Russian front and finally was in Petrograd during the Revolution. He took careful notes of his experiences and eventually published *The Secret City*, a story of Petrograd during the Revolution, and *The Dark Forest*, a story of the war in Russia—both fine and sympathetic studies of the Russian people.

Most of his books, however, deal with English life, and a few, like *Jeremy* and *Jeremy and Hamlet*, with English children in particular.

Soundness of principles, complete and sympathetic understanding of character, simplicity of style, ability to portray the humorous or the grim—these are some of the qualities of Mr. Walpole's writing.

"First as to the actual art of writing; I think that the business of choosing in their proper order the right words is mainly the ability to give the personality of the author the most perfect expression. When we read Lamb or

Hazlitt we are conscious of the beautiful prose but we are still more aware that we are in direct and immediate contact with splendid human beings who are different from any other human beings, whose *talk* is of the most glorious kind. That is surely the difference between journalism and literature; the duty of the journalist is to give news, the most interesting news of the actual moment; when his personality becomes so vivid that you recognize it as something individual then a journalist is writing literature and his personality becomes more important than the news. The greatest journalism that the world has yet seen was, I suppose, to be found in the pages in the English *Times* of the eighties and early nineties. All these articles in these years were anonymous and no one thought of the individual behind the articles. Secondly, the choice of words matters intensely, quite apart from the actual splendour of the prose. A novelist's main business for instance is the creation of human beings and the more power he has over words the more vivid his human beings will be. A character in a novel depends not only on his actual creation but also in the vivid picture of his surroundings; if you write shoddy and meaningless prose these surroundings will never live. On the other hand if a novelist cares too much for the charming game of fitting words together the words will often defeat his characters; both Flaubert and Stevenson are examples of the danger of this. The novelist who is the perfect prose writer is the man who fits his words to his purpose so closely that character and style and narrative are all blended together and all seem inevitable; Tolstoi's *Anna Karenina* and Thackeray's *Esmond* are examples of this.

"I think it is a mistake to direct students' attention to purple passages in prose, a good writer should have no

purple passages; on the other hand he should have no passages of careless and ineffective writing. Here I am asking for a perfection that doesn't exist, but Hazlitt's 'Essay on Going on a Journey' or Macaulay's account of the death of Charles II or, in our own day, the last page of Lytton Strachey's *Queen Victoria* are examples of perfect writing.

"You ask me to say something personal about myself. Of course writing is not a mere pastime; one has all sorts of moods, sometimes it comes easily, sometimes one is carried away into a world of which one is writing so completely that one does not know that one is writing at all. Such a state is heaven for a novelist but it does not come often. As to what I consider my own best writing I would suggest the chapter in *The Dark Forest* that has to do with the stretcher-bearing expedition at night, the chapter in *The Green Mirror* entitled 'Sunday' and the story of the county fair in *Jeremy*. It is perhaps worth while to notice that each of these examples that I have given to you are founded on actual experience. But that only amounts to a criticism of myself; the greatest novelists, I am sure, are those who have created something from the sheer power of creation and not under the inspiration of reminiscence.

"I should say in general that students when they are reading the Essay should look first for a noble and personal style, when they are reading Poetry for a revelation of beauty that is new in its expression even if it is old in its revelation (Wordsworth is a supreme example of this) and in the Novel always *first* for the creation of living and moving human beings. As to contemporary writers, in my own humble opinion the best living six English poets are Thomas Hardy, Robert Bridges, W. B. Yeats, Walter De La Mare, Edmund Blunden, Ralph Hodgson; the best six

English essayists Max Beerbohm, Lytton Strachey, E. V. Lucas, Robert Lynd, J. B. Priestley (whose book on contemporary writers I especially recommend) and George Santayana (I think by the way that he is really American) and the best six living English novelists, omitting Thomas Hardy and Rudyard Kipling who have ceased to write novels, George Moore (I suggest *The Lake* as a perfect modern English novel), John Galsworthy, H. G. Wells, E. N. Forster, Arnold Bennett, and May Sinclair."

—Hugh Walpole.

THE STRETCHER-BEARERS[1]

Never, surely, before, had I known the world so silent. Under the hedges that lined the field there were soldiers like ghosts; our own wagons, with the sanitars walking beside them, moved across the ground without even the creak of a wheel. Semyonov was to meet us in an hour's time at a certain cross-road. I was given the command of the party. I was now, in literal truth, breathlessly excited. My heart was beating in my breast like some creature who makes running leaps at escape. My tongue was dry and my brain hot. But I was happy . . . happy with a strange exaltation that was unlike any emotion that I had known before. It was in part the happiness that I had known sometimes in Rugby football or in tennis when the players were evenly matched and the game hard, but it was more than that. It had in it something of the happiness that I have known, after many days at sea, on the first view of land—but it was more than that. Something of the happiness of possessing, at last, some object which one has many days desired and never hoped to attain—but more, too, than that. Something of the happiness of danger or pain that one has dreaded and finds, in actual truth, gives way before one's resolution—but more, again, than that. This happiness, this exultation that I felt now but dimly, and was to know more fully afterwards (but never, alas, as my companions were to know it) is the subject of this book. The scent of it, the full revelation of it, has not, until now, been my reward; I can only, as a spectator, watch that revelation as it came afterwards to others more fortunate than I. But what I write is the truth as far as I, from the outside, have seen it. If it is not true, this book has no value whatever.

[1] From *The Dark Forest*, pp. 97–104. Copyright 1916 by Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc.

We were warned by the soldier who guarded us not to walk in a group and we stole now, beneath a garden-wall, white under the moon, in a long line. I could hear Trenchard behind me stumbling over the stones and ruts, walking as he always did with little jerks, as though his legs were beyond his control. We came then on to the high road, which was so white and clear in the moonlight that it seemed as though the whole Austrian army must instantly whisper to themselves: "Ah, there they are!" and fire. The ditch to our right, as far as I could see, was lined with soldiers, hidden by the hedge behind them, their rifles just pointing on to the white surface of the land. Our guide asked them their division and was answered in a whisper. The soldiers were ghosts: there was no one, save ourselves, alive in the whole world. . . .

Then a little incident occurred. I was walking in the rear of our wagons that I might see that all were there. I felt a touch on my arm and found Andrey Vassilievitch standing in the middle of the road. His face, staring at me as though I were a stranger, expressed desperate determination.

"Come on," I said. "We've no time to waste."

"I'm not coming," he whispered back. His voice was breathless as though he had been running.

"Nonsense," I answered roughly, and I put my hand on his arm. His body trembled in jerks and starts.

"It's madness . . . this road . . . the moon. . . . Of course they'll fire. . . . We'll all be killed. But it isn't . . . it isn't . . . I can't move. . . ."

"You *must* move. . . . Come, Andrey Vassilievitch, you've been brave enough all day. There's no danger, I tell you. See how quiet everything is. You *must*. . . ."

"I can't. . . . It's nothing . . . nothing to do with me. . . . It's awful all day—and now this!"

I thought of Marie Ivanovna early in the morning. I looked down the road and saw that the wagons were slowly moving into the distant shadows.

"You *must* come," I repeated. "We can't leave you here.

Don't think of yourself. And nothing can touch you—nothing, I tell you."

"I'll go back, I must. I can't go on."

"Go back? How can you? Where to? You can't go back to the trench. We shan't know where to find you." A furious anger seized me; I caught his arm. "I'll leave you, if you like. There are other things more important."

I moved away from him. He looked down the long road, looked back.

"Oh, I can't . . . I can't," he repeated.

"What did you come for?" I whispered furiously. "What did you think war was? . . . Well, good-bye, do as you please!"

As I drew away I saw a look of desperate determination in his eyes. He looked at me like a dog who expects to be beaten. Then what must have been one of the supreme moments of his life came to him. I saw him struggle to command, with the effort of his whole soul, his terror. For a moment he wavered. He made a hopeless gesture with his hand, took two little steps as though he would run into the hedge amongst the soldiers and hide there, then suddenly walked past me, quickly, towards the wagons, with his own absurd little strut, with his head up, giving his cough, looking, after that, neither to the right, nor to the left.

In silence we caught up to the wagons. Soon, at some cross-roads, they came to a pause. The guide was waiting for me. "It would be better, your Honour," he whispered, "for the wagons to stay here. We shall go now simply with the stretchers. . . ."

We left the wagons and, some fifteen of us, turned off down a lane to the left. Sometimes there were soldiers in the hedges, sometimes they met us, slipping from shadow to shadow. Always we asked whether they knew of any wounded. We found a wounded soldier groaning under the hedge. One leg was soaked in blood and he gave little shrill desperate cries as we lifted him on to the stretcher. Another soldier, lying on the road in the moonlight, murmured incessantly: "*Boje' moi! Boje' moi! Boje' moi!*" But they were all ghosts. We alone, in that familiar

and yet so unreal world, were alive. When a stretcher was filled, four sanitars turned back with it to the wagons, and we were soon a very small party. We arrived at a church—a large fantastic white church with a green turret that I had seen from the opposite hill in the morning. Then it had seemed small and very remote. I had been told that much firing had been centring round it, and it seemed now for me very strange that we should be standing under its very shadow, its outline so quiet and grave under the moon, with its churchyard, a little orchard behind it, and a garden, scenting the night air, close at hand. Here in the graveyard there was a group of wounded soldiers, in their eyes that look of faithful expectation of certain relief. Our stretchers were soon full.

We were about to turn back when suddenly the road behind us was filled with shadows. As we came out of the churchyard an officer stepped forward to meet us. We saluted and shook hands. He seemed a boy, but stood in front of his men with an air as though he commanded the whole of this world of ghosts.

"What are you doing here?" he asked.

We explained.

"Well, if you'll excuse me, you'd better make haste. An attack very shortly . . . yes. I should advise you to be out of this. Petrogradsky Otriad? Yes . . . very glad to have the pleasure. . . ."

We left him, his men a grey cloud behind him, and when we had taken a few steps he seemed, with his young air of importance, his happy serious courtesy, to have been called out of the ground, then, with all his shadows behind him, to have been caught up into the air. These were not figures that had anything to do with the little curling wreaths of smoke, the bottles cracking in the sun, our furious giants of the morning.

"Ah, *Boje' moi, Boje' moi!*" sighed the wounded. . . . It was impossible, in such a world of dim shadow, that there should ever be any other sound again.

My excitement had never left me; I had had no doubt, during this last half-hour, that I was on the Enchanted Ground of the

Enemy, so stray and figurative had been my impressions all day. Now they were all gathered into this half-hour and the whole affair received its climax. "Ah," I thought to myself," if I might only stay here now I should draw closer and closer—I should make my discovery, hunt him down. But just when I am on the verge I must leave it all. Ah, if I could but stay!"

Nevertheless we hastened. The world, in spite of the ghosts, was real enough for us to be conscious of that attack looming behind us. We found our wagons, transferred our wounded, then hurried down the road. We found the cross-roads and there, waiting for us, Semyonov and Marie Ivanovna. Standing in the moonlight, commanding, as it seemed to me, all of us, even Semyonov, she was a very different figure from the frightened girl of the early morning. Now her life was in her eyes, her body inflamed with the fire of the things that had come to her. So young in experience was she, so ignorant of all earlier adventure, that she could well be seized, utterly and completely, by her new vision . . . possessed by some vision she was.

And that vision was not Trenchard. Seeing her, he hurried towards her, with a glad cry:

"Ah, you are safe!"

But she did not notice him.

"Quick, this way! . . . Yes, the stretchers here. . . . No, I have everything. . . . At once. There is little time!"

The wounded were laid on the stretchers in the square of the cross-roads. Semyonov and Marie Ivanovna bandaged them under the moonlight and with the aid of electric-torches. On every side of me there were little dialogues: "No . . . not there. More this way. Yes, that bandage will do. It's fresh. Hold up his leg. No, *durak*, under the knee there. . . . Where's the lint? . . . Turn him a little—there—like that. *Horosho*, *golubchik*. *Seitchass!* No, turn it back over the thigh. Now, once more . . . that's it. What's that—bullet or shrapnel? . . . Take it back again, over the shoulder. . . . Yes, twice!"

Once I caught sight of Trenchard, hurrying to be useful with

the little bottle of iodine, stumbling over one of the stretchers, causing the wounded man to cry out.

Then Semyonov's voice angrily:

"Tchort! Who's that? . . . Ah, Meester! of course!"

Then Marie Ivanovna's voice: "I've finished this, Alexei Petrovitch. . . . That's all, isn't it?"

These voices were all whispers, floating from one side of the road to the other. The wounded men were lifted back on to the wagons. We moved off again; Semyonov, Trenchard, Marie Ivanovna and I were now sitting together.

We left the flat fields where we had been so busy. Very slowly we began to climb the hill down which I had come this afternoon. Behind me was a great fan of country, black now under a hidden moon, dead as though our retreat from it, depriving it of the last proofs of life, had flung it back into non-existence. Before us was the black forest. Not a sound save the roll of our wheels and, sometimes, a cry from one of the wounded soldiers, not a stir of wind. . . .

I looked back. Without an instant's warning that dead world, as a match is set to a waiting bonfire, broke into flame. A thousand rockets rose, soaring, in streams of light into the dark sky; the fields that had been vapour ran now with light. A huge projector, the eye, as it seemed to me, of that enemy for whom I had all day been searching, slowly wheeled across the world, cutting a great path across the plain, picking houses and trees and fields out of space, then dropping them back again. The rockets were gold and green, sometimes as it seemed ringed with fire, sometimes cold like dead moons, sometimes sparkling and quivering like great stars. And with this light the whole world crackled into sound as though the sky, a vast china plate, had been smashed by some angry god and been flung, in a million pieces, to earth. The rifle-fire rose from horizon to horizon like a living thing. Now the shrapnel rose, breaking on the dark sky in flashes of fire. Suddenly some house was burning! The flames rose in a column, breaking into tongues that advanced and retreated, climbed and fell again. In the farthest distance

other houses had caught and their glow trembled in faint yellow light fading into shadow when the projector found them. With a roar at our back our own cannon began; the world bellowed and shook and trembled at our feet.

We reached the top of the hill. I caught one final vision, the picture seeming to sway with all its lights, its shadows, its giant eye that governed it, its colours and its mist, like a tapestry blown by wind. I saw in our wagon, their faces lighted by the fire, Semyonov and Marie Ivanovna. Semyonov knelt on the wooden barrier of the cart, his figure outlined square and strong. She was kneeling behind him, her hands on his shoulders. Her face was exultant, victorious. She seemed to me the inspirer of that scene, to have created it, to hold it now with the authority of her gaze.

Behind her Trenchard was in shadow.

We were on the hill-top, the cannon, as it seemed, on every side of us. We hung for a moment so, the sky flaming up to our feet. Then we had fallen down between the woods, every step muffling the sounds. Everything was dark as though a curtain had been dropped.

Semyonov turned round to me.

"Well," he said, "there's your battle. . . . You've been in the thick of it to-day!"

I saw his eyes turned to Marie Ivanovna as though already he possessed her.

I was suddenly tired, disappointed, exhausted.

"We've not been in the thick of it," I answered. "We have missed it—all day we have missed it!"

I tried to settle down in my wagon. "I beg your pardon," I said irritably to Trenchard, "but your boot is in my neck!"

H. M. TOMLINSON

Essayist, story-writer

A usual comment about Mr. Tomlinson is that "he can write prose." Like a great many other authors, he had his early training as a newspaper man, on the editorial staffs of some leading English newspapers. In 1914 he was sent as a war correspondent to Belgium and France; and during 1915–1917 he was Official Correspondent at General Headquarters of the British Armies in France. In 1917–1923 he was literary editor on the London *Nation and Atheneum*. Among the books that he has written are *London River*, *Gallions Reach*, *The Sea and the Jungle*, and *All Our Yesterdays*. He writes not only narrative, but—perhaps more characteristically—critical articles on questions of the day.

March 16, 1918. A critic has been mourning because good prose is not being written to-day. This surprised him, and he asked why it was that when poetry, which he pictured as "primroses and violets," found abundance of nourishment even in the unlikely composts these latter days provide yet prose, which he saw as "cabbages and potatoes," made but miserable growth.

It is hard to explain it, for I must own that the image of the potato confuses me. One has seen modern verse which was, florally, very spud-like. If those potatoes were meant for violets then they suggest more than anything else a simple penny guide-book for their gardeners. Here we see at least the danger of using flowers of speech, when violets

and onions get muddled in the same posy, and how ill botany is likely to serve the writer who flies heedlessly to it for literary symbols. Figures of speech are pregnant with possibilities (I myself had better be very careful here), and those likely to show most distress over their progeny are the unlucky fathers. For the first thing expected of any literary expression is that it should be faithful to what is in the mind, and if for the idea of good prose writing the image of a potato is given, then it can but represent the features of the earthy lumps which are common to the stalls of the market-place. What is prose? Sodden and lumbering stuff, I suppose. And what is poetry? That fortunate lighting of an idea which delights us with the belief that we have surprised truth, and have seen that it is beautiful.

The difficulty with what the textbooks tell us is prose is that many of us make it, not naturally and unconsciously like the gentleman who discovered he had been doing it all his life, but professionally. Consider the immense output of novels—but no, do not let us consider anything so surprising and perplexing. The novel, that most exacting problem in the sublimation of the history of our kind, not to be solved with ease, it now appears may be handled by children as a profitable pastime. Children, of course, should be taught to express themselves in writing, and simply, lucidly, and with sincerity. Yet all editors know the delusion is common with beginners in journalism that the essay, a form in which perhaps only six writers have been successful in the history of English letters, is but a prelude to serious work, a holiday before the realities have begun. They all attempt it. Every editorial letter-box is loaded with essays every morning. Yet the love of learning, and wisdom and humour, are not usual, and the gods still more rarely give with these gifts the ability to express

them in the written word; and how often may we count on learning, wisdom, and humour being not only reflected through a delightful and original character, but miraculously condensed into the controlled display of a bright and revealing beam? It is no wonder that we have but six essayists!

There is no doubt about it. If we mean by prose much more than the sincere and lucid written expression of our desires and opinions, it is because beyond that simplicity we know the thrill which is sometimes given by a revelation of beauty and significance in common words and tidings. The best writing must come of a gift for making magic out of what are but commodities to us, and that gift is not distributed by the generous gods from barrows which go the round of the neighbourhoods where many babies are born, as are faith, hope, and credulity, those virtues that cause the enormous circulations of the picture papers, and form the ready material for the careers of statesmen and the glory of famous soldiers. It is more unusual. We see it as often as we do comets and signs in the heavens, a John in the Wilderness again, pastors who would die for their lambs, women who contemn the ritual and splendour of man-slaying, and a politician never moved by the enticements of a successful career. It is therefore likely that when we see great prose for the first time we may not know it, and may not enjoy it. It can be so disrespectful to what we think is good. It may be even brightly innocent of it. And as in addition our smaller minds will be overborne by the startling activity and cool power of the prose of such a writer as Swift, its superiority will only enhance our complaining grief.

—H. M. Tomlinson, "Prose Writing." [1]

[1] From *Waiting for Daylight*, by and with permission of and special arrangement with Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., authorized publishers.

THE SEA AND THE JUNGLE [1]

The equatorial forest is popularly pictured as a place of bright and varied colours, with extravagant flowers, and abundance of fruits, and huge trees hung with creepers where lurk many venomous but beautiful snakes with gem-like eyes, and a multitude of birds as bright as the flowers; paradise indeed, though haunted by peril. Those details are right, but the picture is wrong. It is true that some of the birds are decorated in a way which makes the most beautiful of our temperate birds seem dull; but the toucans and macaws of the Madeira forest, though common, are not often seen, and when they are seen they are likely to be but obscure atoms drifting high in a white light. About the villages and in the clearings there are usually many superb butterflies and moths, and a varied wealth of vegetation not to be matched outside the tropics, and there will be the fireflies and odours in evening pathways. But the virgin forest itself soon becomes a green monotony which, through extent and mystery, dominates and compels to awe and some dread. You will see it daily, but will not often approach it. It has no splendid blossoms; none, that is, which you will see, except by chance, as by luck one day I saw from the steamer's bridge some trees in blossom, domes of lilacs surmounting the forest levels. Trees are always in blossom there, for it is a land of continuous high summer and there are orchids always in flower and palms and vines that fill acres of forest with fragrance, palms and other trees which give wine and delicious fruits, and somewhere hidden there are the birds of the tropical picture, and dappled jaguars, perfect in colouring and form, and brown men and women who have strange gods. But they are lost in the ocean of leaves as are

[1] From Chapter VI, pp. 291–297. Reprinted by permission of The Modern Library, Inc., publishers.

the pearls and wonders in the deep. You will remember the equatorial forest but as a gloom of foliage in which all else that showed was rare and momentary, was foundered and lost to sight instantly, as an unusual ray of coloured light in one mid-ocean wave gleams, and at once goes, and your surprise at its apparition fades too, and again there is but the empty desolation which is forever but vastness sombrely bright.

One morning, wondering greatly what we should see in the place where we should be the first men to go, Hill and I left camp 22 and returned a little along the track. It was a hot still morning. A vanilla vine was in fragrant flower somewhere, unseen, but unescapable. My little unknown friend in the woods, who calls me at odd times—but I think chiefly when I am near a stream—by whispering thrice, let me know he was about. Hill says he thinks he has seen him, that my little friend looks like a blackbird. On the track in many places were objects which appeared to be long cups inverted, of unglazed ware. Picking up one I found it was the cap to a mine of ants, the inside of the clay cup being hollowed in a perfect circle, and remarkably smooth. A paca dived into the scrub near us. It was early morning, scented with vanilla, and the intricacy of the leaves was radiant. Nowhere in the screen could I see a place through which it was possible to crawl to whatever was behind it. The front of the leaves was unbroken. Hill presently bent double and disappeared, and I followed in the break he made. So we went for about ten minutes, my leader cutting obstructions with his machete, and mostly we had to go almost on hands and knees. The undergrowth was green but in the etiolated way of plants which have little light, though that may have been my fancy. One plant was very common, making light-green feathery barriers. I think it was climbing bamboo. Its stem was vapid and of no diameter, and its grass-like leaves grew in whorls at the joints. It extended to incredible distances. We got out of that margin of undergrowth, which springs up quickly when light is let into the woods, as it was there through the cutting of the track, and found ourselves on a bare floor where the trunks of

arborescent laurels grew so thickly together that our view ahead was restricted to a few yards. We were in the forest. There was a pale tinge of day, but its origin was uncertain, for overhead no foliage could be seen, but only deep shadows from which long ropes were hanging without life. In that obscurity were points of light, as if a high roof had lost some tiles. Hill set a course almost due south, and we went on presently descending to a deep, clear stream over which a tree had fallen. Shafts of daylight came down to us there, making the sandy bottom of the stream luminous, as by a lantern, and betraying crowds of small fishes. As we climbed the tree, to cross upon it, we disturbed several morphos. We had difficulty beyond in a hollow, where the bottom of the forest was lumbered with fallen trees, dry rubbish, and thorns, and once stepping on what looked like timber solid enough, its treacherous shell collapsed, and I went down into a cloud of dust and ants. In clearing this wreckage, which was usually as high as our faces, and doubly confused by the darkness, the involutions of dead thorny creepers and clouds of dried foliage, Hill got at fault with our direction, but he reassured himself, though I don't know how—but I think with the certain knowledge that if we went south long enough we should strike the Madeira somewhere—and on we went. For hours we continued among the trees, seldom knowing what was ahead of us for any distance, surviving points of noise intruding again after long in the dusk of limbo. So still and nocturnal was the forest that it was real only when its forms were close. All else was phantom and of the shades. There was not a green sign of life, and not a sound. Resting once under a tree I began to think there was a conspiracy implied in that murk and awful stillness, and that we should never come again into the day and see a living earth. Hill sat looking out, and said, as if in answer to an unspoken thought of mine which had been heard because there was less than no sound there, that men who were lost in those woods soon went mad.

Then he led on again. This forest was nothing like the paradise a tropical wild is supposed to be. It was as uniformly dingy

as the old stones of a London street on a November evening. We did not see a movement, except when the morphos started from the uprooted tree. Once I heard the whistle call us from the depths of the forest, urgent and startling; and now when in a London byway I hear a boy call his mate in a shrill whistle, it puts about me again the spectral aisles, and that unexpectant quiet of the sepulchre which is more than mere absence of sound, for the dead who should have no voice. This central forest was really the vault of the long-forgotten, dank, mouldering, dark, abandoned to the accumulations of eld and decay. The tall pillars rose, upholding night, and they might have been bastions of weathered limestone and basalt, for they were as grim as ancient and ruinous masonry. There was no undergrowth. The ground was hidden in a ruin of perished stuff, uprooted trees, parchments of leaves, broken boughs, and mummied husks, the iron globes of nuts and pods. There was no day, but some breaks in the roof were points of remote starlight. The crowded columns mounted straight and far, almost branchless, fading into indistinction. Out of that overhead obscurity hung a wreckage of distorted cables, binding the trees, and often reaching the ground. The trees were seldom of great girth, though occasionally there was a dominant basaltic pillar, its roots meandering over the floor like streams of old lava. The smooth ridges of such a fantastic complexity of roots were sometimes breast high. The walls run up the trunk, projecting from it as flat buttresses, for great heights. We would crawl around such an occupying structure, diminished groundlings, as one would move about the base of a foreboding, plutonic building whose limits and meaning were ominous and baffling. There were other great trees with compound boles, built literally of bundles of round stems, intricate Gothic pillars, some of the props having fused in places. Every tree was the support of a parasitic community, lianas swathing it and binding it. One vine moulded itself to its host, a flat and wide compress as though it were plastic. We might have been witnessing what had been a riot of manifold and insurgent life. It had been

turned to stone when in the extreme pose of striving violence. It was all dead now.

But what if these combatants had only paused as we appeared? It was a thought which came to me. The pause might be but an appearance for our deception. Indeed, they were all fighting as we passed through, those still and fantastic shapes, a war ruthless but slow, in which the battle day was ages long. They seemed but still. We were deceived. If time had been accelerated, if the movements in that war of phantoms had been speeded, we should have seen what really was there, the greater trees running upwards to starve the weak of light and food, and heard the continuous collapse of the failures, and have seen the lianas writhing and constricting, manifestly like serpents, throttling and eating their hosts. We did see the dead everywhere, shells with the worms at them. Yet it was not easy to be sure that we saw anything at all, for these were not trees but shapes in a region below the day, a world sunk abysmally from the land of living things, to which light but thinly percolated to two travellers, moving over its floor, trying to get out to their own place.

Late in the afternoon we were surprised by a steep hill in our way, where the forest was more open. Palms became conspicuous on the slopes, and the interior of the sombre woods was lighted with bright graceful foliage. The wild banana was frequent, its long rippling pennants showing everywhere. The hill rose sharply, perhaps for six hundred feet, and over its surface was scattered large stones, and stones are rare indeed in this land of vegetable humus. They were often six inches in diameter, and I should have said they were waterworn but that I had seen them *in situ* at one camp, where they occurred but little below the surface in a friable sandstone, the largest of them easily broken in the hand, for they were but ferrous concretions of quartz grains. After exposure to the air they so hardened that they could be fractured with difficulty. We kept along the ridge of the hill, finding breaks in the forest through which, as through unexpected windows, we could see, for a

wonder, over the roof of the forest, looking out of our prison to a wide world where the sun was declining. In the south-west we caught the gleam of Madeira, and beyond it saw a continuation of the range of hills on which we stood.

In the low ground between the hill range and the river the forest was lower, and was so tangled a mass that I doubted whether we could make a way through it. We happened upon a deserted Caripuna village, three large sheds, without sides, each but a ragged thatch propped on four legs. The clearing was just large enough to hold them. I could find no relics of the forest folk about. Damp leaves were thick on the floor of each shelter. But it was lucky we found the huts, for thence a trail led us to the river. We emerged suddenly from the forest, just as one goes through a little door into the open street. We were on the bank of the Madeira by the upper falls of the Caldeirao. It was still a great river, with the wall of the forest opposite, just above which the sunset was flaming, so far away that its tree trunks were but vertical lines of silver in dark cliffs. A track used by the Bolivian rubber boatman led us downstream to the camp by the lower falls.

MAY SINCLAIR

Novelist, poet

While Miss Sinclair was an able student at the Ladies' College in Cheltenham, a famous educational institution at that time, she was encouraged to write by one of her teachers who had taken an interest in her writing of poetry. Afterwards she went to London to write. In 1892 she published a volume of poems. Later, however, she turned to the writing of novels and in 1904 caused a literary sensation by her *The Divine Fire*. Since then she has continued to write novels that have attracted attention in England and America.

Miss Sinclair has written that she considers *Mary Olivier* her best novel. The opening sections of *Anne Severn and the Fieldings* are equally representative of her work.

In an interview, she once said:

"I work hard at all my novels, especially with regard to style. Each character has to be thought out, to be alive and present to me, before I can begin. I sketch out the whole book carefully, and each chapter separately, before writing a line. Therefore, as the whole is before me more or less, it doesn't matter where I begin a novel. I frequently begin in the middle. I write sometimes rapidly, sometimes at a snail's pace. I have no regular methods of work, no theories of art, no test of it, except excellence of style and construction, and truth to life—the latter the supreme test."

—May Sinclair.

CHILDREN [1]

i

Anne Severn had come again to the Fieldings. This time it was because her mother was dead.

She hadn't been in the house five minutes before she asked "Where's Jerrold?"

"Fancy," they said, "her remembering."

And Jerrold had put his head in at the door and gone out again when he saw her there in her black frock; and somehow she had known he was afraid to come in because her mother was dead.

Her father had brought her to Wyck-on-the-Hill that morning, the day after the funeral. He would leave her there when he went back to India.

She was walking now down the lawn between the two tall men. They were taking her to the pond at the bottom where the goldfish were. It was Jerrold's father who held her hand and talked to her. He had a nice brown face marked with a lot of little fine, smiling strokes, and his eyes were quick and kind.

"You remember the goldfish, Anne?"

"I remember everything."

She had been such a little girl before, and they said she had forgotten.

But she remembered so well that she always thought of Mr. Fielding as Jerrold's father. She remembered the pond and the goldfish. Jerrold held her tight so that she shouldn't tumble in. She remembered the big grey and yellow house with its nine ball-topped gables; and the lawn, shut in by clipped yew hedges, then spreading downwards, like a fan, from the last green terrace where the two enormous peacocks stood, carved out of the yew.

[1] From *Anne Severn and the Fieldings*. Reprinted by permission of The Macmillan Company.

Where it lay flat and still under the green wall she saw the tennis court. Jerrold was there, knocking balls over the net to please little Colin. She could see him fling back his head and laugh as Colin ran stumbling, waving his racquet before him like a stiff flag. She heard Colin squeal with excitement as the balls flew out of his reach.

Her father was talking about her. His voice was sharp and anxious.

"I don't know how she'll get on with your boys." (He always talked about Anne as if she wasn't there.) "Ten's an awkward age. She's too old for Colin and too young for Eliot and Jerrold."

She knew their ages. Colin was only seven. Eliot, the clever one, was very big; he was fifteen. Jerrold was thirteen.

She heard Jerrold's father answering in his quiet voice.

"You needn't worry. Jerry'll look after Anne all right."

"And Adeline."

"Oh yes, of course, Adeline." (Only somehow he made it sound as if she wouldn't.)

Adeline was Mrs. Fielding. Jerrold's mother.

Anne wanted to get away from the quiet, serious men and play with Jerrold; but their idea seemed to be that it was too soon. Too soon after the funeral. It would be all right to go quietly and look at the goldfish; but no, not to play. When she thought of her dead mother she was afraid to tell them that she didn't want to go and look at the goldfish. It was as if she knew that something sad waited for her by the pond at the bottom. She would be safer over there where Jerrold was laughing and shouting. She would play with him and he wouldn't be afraid.

The day felt like a Sunday, quiet, quiet, except for the noise of Jerrold's laughter. Strange and exciting, his boy's voice rang through her sadness; it made her turn her head again and again to look after him; it called her to forget and play.

Little slim brown minnows darted backwards and forwards under the olive-green water of the pond. And every now and then the fat goldfish came nosing along, orange, with silver patches shining, making the water light round them, stiff mouths

wide open. When they bobbed up, small bubbles broke from them and sparkled and went out.

Anne remembered the goldfish; but somehow they were not so fascinating as they used to be.

A queer plant grew on the rock border of the pond. Green fleshy stems, with blunt spikes all over them. Each carried a tiny gold star at its tip. Thick, cold juice would come out of it if you squeezed it. She thought it would smell like lavender.

It had a name. She tried to think of it.

Stonecrop. Stonecrop. Suddenly she remembered.

Her mother stood with her by the pond, dark and white and slender. Anne held out her hands smeared with the crushed flesh of the stonecrop; her mother stooped and wiped them with her pocket-handkerchief, and there was a smell of lavender. The goldfish went swimming by in the olive-green water.

Anne's sadness came over her again; sadness so heavy that it kept her from crying; sadness that crushed her breast and made her throat ache.

They went back up the lawn, quietly, and the day felt more and more like Sunday, or like—like a funeral day.

"She's very silent, this small daughter of yours," Mr. Fielding said.

"Yes," said Mr. Severn.

His voice came with a stiff jerk, as if it choked him. He remembered, too.

ii

The grey and yellow flagstones of the terrace were hot under your feet.

Jerrold's mother lay out there on a pile of cushions, in the sun. She was very large and very beautiful. She lay on her side, heaved up on one elbow. Under her thin white gown you could see the big lines of her shoulder and hip, and of her long full thigh, tapering to the knee.

Anne crouched beside her, uncomfortably, holding her little body away from the great warm mass among the cushions.

Mrs. Fielding was aware of this shrinking. She put out her arm and drew Anne to her side again.

"Lean back," she said. "Close. Closer."

And Anne would lean close, politely, for a minute, and then stiffen and shrink away again when the soft arm slackened.

Eliot Fielding (the clever one) lay on his stomach, stretched out across the terrace. He leaned over a book: *Animal Biology*. He was absorbed in a diagram of a rabbit's heart and took no notice of his mother or of Anne.

Anne had been at the Manor five days, and she had got used to Jerrold's mother's caresses. All but one. Every now and then Mrs. Fielding's hand would stray to the back of Anne's neck, where the short curls, black as her frock, sprang out in a thick bunch. The fingers stirred among the roots of Anne's hair, stroking, stroking, lifting the bunch and letting it fall again. And whenever they did this Anne jerked her head away and held it stiffly out of their reach.

She remembered how her mother's fingers, slender and silk-skinned and loving, had done just that, and how their touch went thrilling through the back of her neck, how it made her heart beat. Mrs. Fielding's fingers didn't thrill you, they were blunt and fumbling. Anne thought: "She's no business to touch me like that. No business to think she can do what mother did."

She was always doing it, always trying to be a mother to her. Her father had told her she was going to try. And Anne wouldn't let her. She would not let her.

"Why do you move your head away, darling?"

Anne didn't answer.

"You used to love it. You used to come bending your funny little neck and turning first one ear and then the other. Like a little cat. And now you won't let me touch you."

"No. No. Not—like that."

"Yes. Yes. Like this. You don't remember."

"I *do* remember."

She felt the blunt fingers on her neck again and started up.

The beautiful, wilful woman lay back on her cushions, smiling to herself.

"You're a funny little thing, aren't you?" she said.

Anne's eyes were glassed. She shook her head fiercely and spilled tears.

Jerrold had come up on to the terrace. Colin trotted after him. They were looking at her. Eliot had raised his head from his book and was looking at her.

"It *is* rotten of you, mater," he said, "to tease that kid."

"I'm not teasing her. Really, Eliot, you do say things—as if nobody but yourself had any sense. You can run away now, Anne darling."

Anne stood staring, with wild animal eyes that saw no place to run to.

It was Jerrold who saved her.

"I say, would you like to see my new buck rabbit?"

"Rather!"

He held out his hand and she ran off with him, along the terrace, down the steps at the corner and up the drive to the stable yard where the rabbits were. Colin followed headlong.

And as she went Anne heard Eliot saying, "I've sense enough to remember that her mother's dead."

In his worst tempers there was always some fierce pity.

iii

Mrs. Fielding gathered herself together and rose, with dignity, still smiling. It was a smile of great sweetness, infinitely remote from all discussion.

"It's much too hot here,"she said. "You might move the cushions down there under the beech-tree."

That, Eliot put it to himself, was just her way of getting out of it. To Eliot the irritating thing about his mother was her dexterity in getting out. She never lost her temper, and never replied to any serious criticism; she simply changed the subject, leaving you with your disapproval on your hands.

In this Eliot's young subtlety misled him. Adeline Fielding's

mind was not the clever, calculating thing that, at fifteen, he thought it. Her one simple idea was to be happy and, as a means to that end, to have people happy about her. His father, or Anne's father, could have told him that all her ideas were simple as feelings and impromptu. Impulse moved her, one moment, to seize on the faithful, defiant little heart of Anne, the next, to get up out of the sun. Anne's tears spoiled her bright world; but not for long. Coolness was now the important thing, not Anne and not Anne's mother. As for Eliot's disapproval, she was no longer aware of it.

"Oh, to be cool, to be cool again! Thank you, my son."

Eliot had moved all the cushions down under the tree, scowling as he did it, for he knew that when his mother was really cool he would have to get up and move them back again.

With the perfect curve of a great supple animal, she turned and settled in her lair, under her tree.

. . . . . .

viii

Jerrold was brave.

When Colin upset the schoolroom lamp Jerrold wrapped it in the tablecloth and threw it out of the window just in time. He put the chain on Billy, the sheep-dog, when he went mad and snapped at everybody. It seemed odd that Jerrold should be frightened.

A minute ago he had been happy, rolling over and over on the grass, shouting with laughter while Sandy, the Aberdeen, jumped on him, growling his merry puppy's growl and biting the balled fists that pushed him off.

They were all out on the lawn. Anne waited for Jerry to get up and take her into Wyck, to buy chocolates.

Every time Jerrold laughed his mother laughed too, a throaty, girlish giggle.

"I love Jerry's laugh," she said. "It's the nicest noise he makes."

Then, suddenly, she stopped it. She stopped it with a word.

"If you're going into Wyck, Jerry, you might tell Yearp—"

Yearp.

He got up. His face was very red. He looked mournful and frightened too. Yes, frightened.

"I—can't, Mother."

"You can perfectly well. Tell Yearp to come and look at Pussy's ears, I think she's got canker."

"She hasn't," said Jerry defiantly.

"She jolly well has," said Eliot.

"Rot."

"You only say that because you don't like to think she's got it."

"Eliot can go himself. *He's* fond of Yearp."

"You'll do as you're told, Jerry. It's downright cowardice."

"It isn't cowardice, is it, Daddy?"

"Well," said his father, "it isn't exactly courage."

"Whatever it is," his mother said, "you'll have to get over it. You go on as if nobody cared about poor Binky but yourself."

Binky was Jerry's dog. He had run into a motor-bicycle in the Easter holidays and hurt his back, so that Yearp, the vet, had had to come and give him chloroform. That was why Jerrold was afraid of Yearp. When he saw him he saw Binky with his nose in the cup of chloroform; he heard him snorting out his last breath. And he couldn't bear it.

"I could send one of the men," his father was saying.

"Don't encourage him, Robert. He's got to face it."

"Yes, Jerrold, you'd better go and get it over. You can't go on funking it forever."

Jerrold went. But he went alone, he wouldn't let Anne go with him. He said he didn't want her to be mixed up with it.

"He means," said Eliot, "that he doesn't want to think of Yearp every time he sees Anne."

ix

It was true that Eliot was fond of Yearp's society. He would spend hours with him, learning how to dissect frogs and rabbits

and pigeons. He drove about the country with Yearp seeing the sick animals, the ewes at lambing time and the cows at their calving. And he spent half the midsummer holidays reading *Animal Biology* and drawing diagrams of frogs' hearts and pigeons' brains. He said he wasn't going to Oxford or Cambridge when he left Cheltenham; he was going to Barts. He wanted to be a doctor. But his mother said he didn't know what he'd want to be in three years' time. She thought him awful, with his frogs' hearts and horrors.

Next to Jerrold and little Colin Anne loved Eliot. He seemed to know when she was thinking about her mother and to understand. He took her into the woods to look for squirrels; he showed her the wildflowers and told her all their names: bugloss, and lady's smock and speedwell, king-cup, willow herb and meadow sweet, crane's bill and celandine.

One day they found in the garden a tiny egg-shaped shell made of gold-coloured lattice work. When they put it under the microscope they saw inside it a thing like a green egg. Every day they watched it; it put out two green horns, and a ridge grew down the middle of it, and one morning they found the golden shell broken. A long, elegant fly with slender wings crawled beside it.

When Benjy died of eating too much lettuce Eliot was sorry. Aunt Adeline said it was all put on and that he really wanted to cut him up and see what he was made of. But Eliot didn't. He said Benjy was sacred. That was because he knew they loved him. And he dug the grave and lined it with moss and told Aunt Adeline to shut up when she said it ought to have been lettuce leaves.

Aunt Adeline complained that it was hard that Eliot couldn't be nice to her when he was her favorite.

"Little Anne, little Anne, what have you done to my Eliot?" She was always saying things like that. Anne couldn't think what she meant till Jerrold told her she was the only kid that Eliot had ever looked at. The big Hawtrey girl from Medlicote would have given her head to be in Anne's shoes.

But Anne didn't care. Her love for Jerrold was sharp and exciting. She brought tears to it and temper. It was mixed up with God and music and the deaths of animals, and sunsets and all sorrowful and beautiful and mysterious things. Thinking about her mother made her think about Jerrold; but she never thought about Eliot at all when he wasn't there.

She would run away from Eliot any minute if she heard Jerrold calling. It was Jerrold, Jerrold, all the time, said Aunt Adeline.

And when Eliot was busy with his microscope and Jerrold had turned from her to Colin, there was Uncle Robert. He seemed to know the moments when she wanted him. Then he would take her out riding with him over the estate that stretched from Wyck across the valley of the Speed and beyond it for miles over the hills. And he would show her the reaping machines at work, and the great carthorses, and the prize bullocks in their stalls at the Manor Farm. And Anne told him her secret, the secret she had told to nobody but Jerrold.

"Some day," she said, "I shall have a farm, with horses and cows and pigs and little calves."

"Shall you like that?"

"Yes," said Anne. "I would. Only it can't happen till Grandpapa's dead. And I don't want him to die."

X

They were saying now that Colin was wonderful. He was only seven, yet he could play the piano like a grown-up person, very fast and with loud noises in the bass. And he could sing like an angel. When you heard him you could hardly believe that he was a little boy who cried sometimes and was afraid of ghosts. Two masters came out from Cheltenham twice a week to teach him. Eliot said Colin would be a professional when he grew up, but his mother said he should be nothing of the sort and Eliot wasn't to go putting nonsense like that into his head. Still, she was proud of Colin when his hands went pounding and flashing over the keys. Anne had to give up practising because she did it so badly that it hurt Colin to hear her.

He wasn't in the least conceited about his playing, not even when Jerrold stood beside him and looked on and said, "Clever Col-Col. Isn't he a wonderful kid? Look at him. Look at his little hands, all over the place."

He didn't think playing was wonderful. He thought the things that Jerrold did were wonderful. With his child's legs and arms he tried to do the things that Jerrold did. They told him he would have to wait nine years before he could do them. He was always talking about what he would do in nine years' time.

And there was the day of the walk to High Slaughter, through the valley of the Speed to the valley of the Windlode, five miles there and back. Eliot and Jerrold and Anne had tried to sneak out when Colin wasn't looking; but he had seen them and came running after them down the field, calling to them to let him come. Eliot shouted "We can't, Col-Col, it's too far," but Colin looked so pathethic, standing there in the big field, that Jerrold couldn't bear it.

"I think," he said, "we might let him come."

"Yes. Let him," Anne said.

"Rot. He can't walk it."

"I can," said Colin. "I can."

"I tell you he can't. If he's tired he'll be sick in the night and then he'll say it's ghosts."

Colin's mouth trembled.

"It's all right, Col-Col, you're coming." Jerrold held out his hand.

"Well," said Eliot, "if he crumples up *you* can carry him."

"I can," said Jerrold.

"So can I," said Anne.

"Nobody," said Colin, "shall carry me. I can walk."

Eliot went on grumbling while Colin trotted happily beside them. "You're a fearful ass, Jerrold. You're simple ruining that kid. He thinks he can come butting into everything. Here's the whole afternoon spoiled for all three of us. He can't walk. You'll see he'll drop out in the first mile."

"I shan't, Jerrold."

And he didn't. He struggled on down the fields to Upper Speed and along the river-meadows to Lower Speed and Hayes Mill, and from Hayes Mill to High Slaughter. It was when they started to walk back that his legs betrayed him, slackening first, then running, because running was easier than walking, for a change. Then dragging. Then being dragged between Anne and Jerrold (for he refused to be carried). Then staggering, stumbling, stopping dead; his child's mouth drooping.

Then Jerrold carried him on his back with his hands clasped under Colin's soft hips. Colin's body slipped every minute and had to be jerked up again; and when it slipped his arms tightened round Jerrold's neck, strangling him.

At last Jerrold, too, staggered and stumbled and stopped dead.

"I'll take him," said Eliot. He forbore, nobly, to say "I told you so."

And by turns they carried him, from the valley of the Windlode to the valley of the Speed, past Hayes Mill, through Lower Speed, Upper Speed, and up the fields to Wyck Manor. Then up the stairs to the schoolroom, pursued by their mother's cries.

"Oh Col-Col, my little Col-Col! What have you done to him, Eliot?"

Eliot bore it like a lamb.

Only after they had left Colin in the schoolroom, he turned on Jerrold.

"Some day," he said, "Col-Col will be a perfect nuisance. Then you and Anne'll have to pay for it."

"Why me and Anne?"

"Because you'll both be fools enough to keep on giving in to him."

"I suppose," said Jerrold bitterly, "you think you're clever."

Adeline came out and overheard him and made a scene in the gallery before Pinkney, the footman, who was bringing in the schoolroom tea. She said Eliot was clever enough and old enough to know better. They were all old enough. And Jerrold said it was his fault, not Eliot's, and Anne said it was hers, too. And Adeline declared that it was all their faults and she would

have to speak to their father. She kept it up long after Eliot and Jerrold had retreated to the bathroom. If it had been anybody but her little Col-Col. She wouldn't *have* him dragged about the country till he dropped.

She added that Col-Col was her favorite.

. . . . . .

xii

"Where's Jerrold?"

Robert Fielding called from the dogcart that waited by the porch. Eliot sat beside him, very stiff and straight, painfully aware of his mother who stood on the flagged path below, and made yearning faces at him, doing her best, at this last moment, to destroy his morale. Colin sat behind him by Jerrold's place, tearful but excited. He was to go with them to the station. Eliot tried hard to look as if he didn't care; and, as his mother said, he succeeded beautifully.

It was the end of the holidays.

"Adeline, you might see where Jerrold is."

She went into the house and saw Anne and Jerrold coming slowly down the stairs together from the gallery. At the turn they stopped and looked at each other, and suddenly he had her in his arms. They kissed, with close, quick kisses and then stood apart, listening.

Adeline went back. "The monkey," she thought; "and I who told her she didn't know how to do it."

Jerrold ran out, very red in the face and defiant. He gave himself to his mother's large embrace, broke from it, and climbed into the dogcart. The mare bounded forward, Jerrold and Eliot raised their hats, shouted and were gone.

Adeline watched while the long lines of the beech-trees narrowed on them, till the dogcart swung out between the ball-topped pillars of the Park gates.

Last time their going had been nothing to her. To-day she could hardly bear it. She wondered why.

She turned and found little Anne standing beside her. They moved suddenly apart. Each had seen the other's tears.

xiii

Outside Colin's window the tree rocked in the wind. A branch brushed backwards and forwards, it tapped on the pane. Its black shadow shook on the grey, moonlit wall.

Jerrold's empty bed showed white and dreadful in the moonlight, covered with a sheet. Colin was frightened.

A narrow passage divided his room from Anne's. The doors stood open. He called "Anne! Anne!"

A light thud on the floor of Anne's room, then the soft padding of naked feet, and Anne stood beside him in her white nightgown. Her hair rose in a black ruff round her head, her eyes were very black in the sharp whiteness of her face.

"Are you frightened, Colin?"

"No, I'm not exactly frightened, but I think there's something there."

"It's nothing. Only the tree."

"I mean—in Jerry's bed."

"Oh no, Colin."

"Dare you," he said, "sit on it?"

"Of course I dare. *Now* you see. *Now* you won't be frightened."

"You know," Colin said, "I don't mind a bit when Jerrold's there. The ghosts never come then, because he frightens them away."

The clock struck ten. They counted the strokes. Anne still sat on Jerrold's bed with her knees drawn up to her chin and her arms clasped round them.

"I'll tell you a secret," Colin said. "Only you mustn't tell."

"I won't."

"Really and truly?"

"Really and truly."

"I think Jerrold's the wonderfullest person in the whole world. When I grow up I'm going to be like him."

"You couldn't be."

"Not now. But when I'm grown-up, I say."

"You couldn't be. Not even then. Jerrold can't sing and he can't play."

"I don't care."

"But you mustn't do what he can't if you want to be like him."

"When I'm singing and playing I shall pretend I'm not."

"You needn't. You won't ever be him."

"I—shall."

"Col-Col, I don't want you to be like him. I don't want anybody else to be like Jerrold in the whole world."

"But," said Colin, "I shall be like him."

xiv

Every night Adeline still came to see Anne in bed. The little thing had left off pretending to be asleep. She lay with eyes wide open, yielding sweetly to the embrace.

To-night her eyelids lay shut, slack on her eyes, and Adeline thought, "She's really asleep, the little lamb. Better not touch her."

She was going away when a sound stopped her. A sound of sobbing.

"Anne—Anne—are you crying?"

A tremulous drawing-in of breath, a shaking under the bedclothes. On Anne's white cheek the black eyelashes were parted and pointed with her tears. She had been crying a long time.

Adeline knelt down, her face against Anne's face.

"What is it, darling? Tell me."

Anne shivered.

"Oh Anne, I wish you loved me. You don't, ducky, a little bit."

"I do. I do. Really and truly."

"Then give me a kiss. The proper kind."

Anne gave her the tight, deep kiss that was the proper kind.

"Now—tell me what it is." She knew by Anne's surrender that, this time, it was not her mother.

"I don't know."

"You *do* know. Is it Jerry? Do you want Jerry?"

At the name Anne's crying broke out again, savage, violent. Adeline held her close and let the storm beat itself out against her heart.

"You can't want him more than I do, little Anne."

"You'll have him when he comes back. And I shan't. I shall be gone."

"You'll come again, darling. You'll come again."

DOROTHY M. RICHARDSON

Novelist

Whenever a writer tries to do anything radically different from accepted standards, he is sure, on the one hand, to call upon himself adverse criticism; and, on the other hand, the work of a host of imitators. Such has been the experience of Miss Richardson, who explains her literary purposes in her letter.

"My method, about which so much has been written, must owe whatever power it possesses to something other than its alleged singularity. For singular it cannot be called. George Moore and Henry James both used it, the one with anesthetic and the other with, relatively, more psychological *connaissance de cause*. And all, before or since, have in some measure or fashion used it who for whatever reason have refused to interpose between the reader and the text, either by acting as conductor of the tour—by giving extraneous information with regard to characters—or by representing current systems of ideas—by *commenting*, both directly and, by means of the use of qualitative adjectives, indirectly.

"In so far as my 'method' came to me innocently and took me by surprise, it is my own. Setting out to present, at the beginning of *Pointed Roofs*, the girl Miriam going upstairs I was, as far as I knew, ready to supply descriptive information about her and her family, but found it im-

mediately impossible to step aside for the purpose of chatting with the reader. I realized the restrictions involved in the sacrifice and also what was to be gained thereby in vividness of presentation. It is the pursuit of this clue that gives some of my work the quality of scenes thrown on a screen and caused it to be called first kaleidoscopic and later cinematographical. Not unnaturally I imagined it to be the only method worth handling, worth living and dying for, and felt, as what innocent artist has not at some time or another felt, all other methods to be irrelevant! Unsupported by this monstrous conviction I could not have held alone the arduous, fascinating path.

"Wiser some fifteen years after the event, I see now two factors holding sway. First the dawning questioning of accepted theories, in every department of human speculation, that synchronised with my girlhood and made me, when I came to write, unable to admit psychological or other theorems as characters in the story, and secondly my sex. As a woman, I find the inner life, whatever it may be called, relatively more real than any adventure in the world of 'facts.'

"With regard to single chapters, volumes, of my work it is not easy to discriminate as they are all of a piece. Both *Pointed Roofs* and *Oberland* have for me the charm of foreign scenes, which serve also to unify them. But the 'scene' unifying the whole is, in so far as it emerges anywhere, everywhere to be found."

—Dorothy Richardson.

OBERLAND [1]

She was alone in the corridor of the sleeping train, in a cold air that reeked of rusting metal and resounded with the clangour of machinery. Exploring in both directions she found no sign of an attendant, nothing but closely shrouded carriages telling of travellers outstretched and slumbering. Into either of these she felt it impossible to break. There was nothing for it but to abandon the hope of a night's rest and drop to a class whose passengers would be numerous and seated. The train had gathered a speed that flung her from side to side as she went. In two journeys she got her belongings across the metal bridge that swayed above the couplings, and arrived with bruised arms and shoulders in another length of corridor, a duplicate in noise and cold emptiness of the one she had left. Everywhere shrouded carriages. But something had changed, there was something even in the pitiless clangour that seemed to announce a change of class.

The door she pushed open revealed huddled shapes whose dim faces, propped this way and that, were all relaxed in slumber. There was no visible vacant place, but as she hesitated within the emerging reek a form stirred and sat forward as if to enquire; and when she struggled in with her bags and her apology the carriage came to life in heavily draped movement.

She was seated, shivering in a fog of smells, but at rest, escaped from nightmare voyaging amongst swaying shadows. The familiar world was about her again and she sat blessing the human kindliness of these sleeping forms, blessing the man who had first moved, even though his rousing had proved to be anxiety about the open door which, the moment she was inside,

[1] From *Oberland*, pp. 16–18. Reprinted by permission of the author and Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

he had closed with the gusty blowings of one who takes refuge from a blizzard.

But the sense of home-coming began presently to fade under the pressure of suffering that promised only to increase. She had long ceased to wonder what made it possible for these people to add wraps and rugs to the thick layers of the stifling atmosphere and remain serene. The effort was no longer possible that had carried her through appearances into a sense of the reality beneath. She saw them now as repellent mysteries, pitiless aliens dowered with an unfathomable faculty for dispensing with air. With each breath the smells that had greeted her, no longer separately apparent, advanced in waves whose predominant flavour was the odour of burnt rubber rising from the grating that ran along the middle of the floor and seemed to sear the soles of her feet. Getting beneath them her rolled rug, she abandoned all but the sense of survival and sank into herself, into a coma in which everything but the green-veiled oscillating light was motionless forever. Forever the night would go on and her head turn now this way now that against the harsh upholstery.

W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

Novelist, essayist, dramatist

Whatever medium of expression Mr. Maugham uses, he sees life and writes of it as a dramatist would. He sees all of life—its bad as well as its good. In advice "To A Young Novelist," published in *The Bookman* for February, 1925, he would disagree with the proposition that anyone with native ability can write good literature, even if he lived the secluded life of Jane Austen or moved in the narrow social circle of Henry James. Excellent as their novels were, he believes a writer can do his best if he knows as much about people as he possibly can. This is not mere theory with Mr. Maugham. He went to school in Canterbury and spent his university years at Heidelberg; he took a degree in medicine in London, although he never practiced it; and he has traveled in far countries—not a smattering sort of traveling either: he has lingered long enough wherever he has gone to get accurate material for his stories. He has always kept a notebook in which he has put fresh impressions which have gone later to make up his plots and background and characters.

"With regard to any suggestions I can give on the art of composition and the business of writing, I can put the little I know into very few words. I should recommend the young writer to study such of the English classics as particularly appeal to him. My own impression is that the best masters to enable anyone to form a pleasant English style are Dryden, Swift, Addison, and Newman. For a long time I gave up half an hour a day to copying out

passages of these authors. For the rest my advice to the young author is to read widely, making a point of spending in this pursuit three hours a day at least and by no means omitting to read fully the daily paper. Here he will get life as nearly at first hand as anyone can hope to do and keep himself abreast of his time. Then I should recommend him to expose himself to as many of the experiences of life as he can; the unpleasant ones will prove no less useful than the others."

—Somerset Maugham.

But Philip could not live long in the rarefied air of the hilltops. What had happened to him when first he was seized by the religious emotion happened to him now. Because he felt so keenly the beauty of faith, because the desire for self-sacrifice burned in his heart with such a gem-like glow, his strength seemed inadequate to his ambition. He was tired out by the violence of his passion. His soul was filled on a sudden with a singular aridity. He began to forget the presence of God which had seemed so surrounding; and his religious exercises, still very punctually performed, grew merely formal. At first he blamed himself for this falling away, and the fear of hell-fire urged him to renewed vehemence; but the passion was dead, and gradually other interests distracted his thoughts.

Philip had few friends. His habit of reading isolated him: it became such a need that after being in company for some time he grew tired and restless; he was vain of the wider knowledge he had acquired from the perusal of so many books, his mind was alert, and he had not the skill to hide his contempt for his companions' stupidity. They complained that he was conceited; and, since he excelled only in matters which to them were unimportant, they asked satirically what he had to be conceited about. He was developing a sense of humour, and found that he had a knack of saying bitter things, which caught people on the raw; he said them because they amused him, hardly realising how much they hurt, and was much offended when he found that his victims regarded him with active dislike. The humiliations he suffered when first he went to school had caused in him a shrinking from his fellows which he could never entirely

[1] From Chapter XVIII. Copyright 1917 by Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc.

overcome; he remained shy and silent. But though he did everything to alienate the sympathy of other boys he longed with all his heart for the popularity which to some was so easily accorded. These from his distance he admired extravagantly; and though he was inclined to be more sarcastic with them than with others, though he made little jokes at their expense, he would have given anything to change places with them. Indeed he would gladly have changed places with the dullest boy in the school who was whole of limb. He took to a singular habit. He would imagine that he was some boy whom he had a particular fancy for; he would throw his soul, as it were, into the other's body, talk with his voice and laugh with his laugh; he would imagine himself doing all the things the other did. It was so vivid that he seemed for a moment really to be no longer himself. In this way he enjoyed many intervals of fantastic happiness.

At the beginning of the Christmas term which followed on his confirmation Philip found himself moved into another study. One of the boys who shared it was called Rose. He was in the same form as Philip, and Philip had always looked upon him with envious admiration. He was not good-looking; though his large hands and big bones suggested that he would be a tall man, he was clumsily made; but his eyes were charming, and when he laughed (he was constantly laughing) his face wrinkled all round them in a jolly way. He was neither clever nor stupid, but good enough at his work and better at games. He was a favourite with masters and boys, and he in his turn liked everyone.

When Philip was put in the study he could not help seeing that the others, who had been together for three terms, welcomed him coldly. It made him nervous to feel himself an intruder; but he had learned to hide his feelings, and they found him quiet and unobtrusive. With Rose, because he was as little able as anyone else to resist his charm, Philip was even more than usually shy and abrupt; and whether on account of this, unconsciously bent upon exerting the fascination he knew

was his only by the results, or whether from sheer kindness of heart, it was Rose who first took Philip into the circle. One day, quite suddenly, he asked Philip if he would walk to the football field with him. Philip flushed.

"I can't walk fast enough for you," he said.

"Rot. Come on."

And just before they were setting out some boy put his head in the study-door and asked Rose to go with him.

"I can't," he answered. "I've already promised Carey."

"Don't bother about me," said Philip quickly. "I shan't mind."

"Rot," said Rose.

He looked at Philip with those good-natured eyes of his and laughed. Philip felt a curious tremor in his heart.

In a little while, their friendship growing with boyish rapidity, the pair were inseparable. Other fellows wondered at the sudden intimacy, and Rose was asked what he saw in Philip.

"Oh, I don't know," he answered. "He's not half a bad chap really."

Soon they grew accustomed to the two walking into chapel arm in arm or strolling round the precincts in conversation; wherever one was the other could be found also, and, as though acknowledging his proprietorship, boys who wanted Rose would leave messages with Carey. Philip at first was reserved. He would not let himself yield entirely to the proud joy that filled him; but presently his distrust of the fates gave way before a wild happiness. He thought Rose the most wonderful fellow he had ever seen. His books now were insignificant; he could not bother about them when there was something infinitely more important to occupy him. Rose's friends used to come in to tea in the study sometimes or sit about when there was nothing better to do—Rose liked a crowd and the chance of a rag—and they found that Philip was quite a decent fellow. Philip was happy.

When the last day of term came he and Rose arranged by which train they should come back, so that they might meet

at the station and have tea in the town before returning to school. Philip went home with a heavy heart. He thought of Rose all through the holidays, and his fancy was active with the things they would do together next term. He was bored at the vicarage, and when on the last day his uncle put him the usual question in the usual facetious tone:

"Well, are you glad to be going back to school?"

Philip answered joyfully:

"Rather."

In order to be sure of meeting Rose at the station he took an earlier train than he usually did, and he waited about the platform for an hour. When the train came in from Faversham, where he knew Rose had to change, he ran along it excitedly. But Rose was not there. He got a porter to tell him when another train was due, and he waited; but again he was disappointed; and he was cold and hungry, so he walked, through side-streets and slums, by a short cut to the school. He found Rose in the study, with his feet on the chimney-piece, talking eighteen to the dozen with half a dozen boys who were sitting on whatever there was to sit on. He shook hands with Philip enthusiastically, but Philip's face fell, for he realised that Rose had forgotten all about their appointment.

"I say, why are you so late?" said Rose. "I thought you were never coming."

"You were at the station at half-past four," said another boy. "I saw you when I came."

Philip blushed a little. He did not want Rose to know that he had been such a fool as to wait for him.

"I had to see about a friend of my people's," he invented readily. "I was asked to see her off."

But his disappointment made him a little sulky. He sat in silence, and when spoken to answered in monosyllables. He was making up his mind to have it out with Rose when they were alone. But when the others had gone Rose at once came over and sat on the arm of the chair in which Philip was lounging.

"I say, I'm jolly glad we're in the same study this term. Ripping, isn't it?"

He seemed so genuinely pleased to see Philip that Philip's annoyance vanished. They began as if they had not been separated for five minutes to talk eagerly of the thousand things that interested them.

FRANCIS BRETT YOUNG

Novelist

Physicians should make the best of novelists, because they have the best opportunity in the world to study human behavior. There have been many writers who practiced medicine first and there are some now. Among eminent contemporary physician-novelists is Dr. Young.

After studying medicine, he traveled for a while and then practiced in Devon until the World War, when he became a medical officer under General Smuts and saw German East Africa come under British control. He was invalided home and then began writing fiction, using the Africa that he had learned to know as setting for some of his novels. Recently he has lived in Italy.

A suggestion of Devon, a bit of Italy, are in his novel *Sea Horses;* but Africa forms the greatest part of the colorful background. A short time ago this novel was filmed; and, like all good novels, whose art after all lies in the use of words, it suffered. Twisted about to suit the movie public, stripped of its beautiful prose, it became merely another motion picture romance. However good the tricks of the camera, there was missing the real feeling of the awesome and sinister lure of the jungle that is present in Dr. Young's word pictures.

Cold Harbour, with English setting, is no less vivid with its mysterious manor house and its unhappy inhabitants. The difficult method of telling a story through a reporter (and this time two reporters) succeeds here admirably through Dr. Young's skill, for the shivery feeling of the reader is strengthened by listening to two people who have felt something that is uncanny.

"It is a commonplace to tell you that writers are born, but a heresy to say that they are not made. The first creative impulse is generally, in my experience, as closely and subtly incorporated in the germ-cell as any other hereditary characteristic: so that no human being can wake up one morning and say to himself: 'I think it would be rather fun, and profitable fun, to become a writer, so I'll enroll myself in one of ——'s classes at the University of ———,' not even, let me add, if he has learning or a world-shaking 'message' behind him. The writing of good English—by which I mean English that has in itself the quality which commands immediate attention and assures survival, is as much a natural endowment as the sense which deals in music or in colour. A large percentage of humanity are born tone-deaf and colour-blind, and an even larger proportion are born deaf and blind to the tones and colours of words, and neither you nor any living soul can cure them. It goes without saying that many of these unlucky people are consumed by a desire to write: more, some of them become successful writers; but that, I take it, is not the kind of writing about which we are talking.

"Let us suppose then that you have among your pupils five per cent (to quote an improbable figure) of persons who are neither word-deaf nor word-blind. Do not let them imagine, for one moment, that in this dower they possess a through-ticket to immortality. That is only a beginning. Poetry aside—for the poets can look after themselves: nobody ever looks after them!—there has never been a writer of great prose who has not achieved his style by a painful degree of concentration and experiment over and above his original endowment. When Stevenson wrote about the 'primrose way' he was talking through his hat,

as his own experience, more signally than that of any other writer of modern times, proves. And Stevenson's original endowment, I may remind you, was a considerable one, though his whole literary history is marked by the derelicts of prose works begun with confidence and enthusiasm and constructed with painful labour only to be abandoned in the end. It was a rash man who defined genius as an infinite capacity for taking pains; but without that capacity it is doubtful if any work of genius achieves a full fruition.

"I don't, for one moment, consider myself a great prose-writer, and I do not dare to hope that I shall ever become one; but, in common with every honest student of letters, I realize that no good art is easy, and I believe that the part of my life which I have devoted to it has not been wholly without reward. Today I can only read my early books, books that I published with the utmost confidence and delight, with pain. Their faults, so obvious to a maturer eye, are, I suppose, the faults of all young work, and I will mention one or two of them because they are almost certain to appear in the work of your pupils, though the gulf between recognition and correction is a wide one. They are:

"(1) Over-emphasis.—The kind of reader to whom you wish to appeal is not, one hopes, a fool. Give him credit for understanding you, and when you have said a thing once, don't reinforce it by repetition.

"(2) Over-decoration. 'The adjectival style.'—This is the commonest fault of youth, and never, never, never conceals the lack of constructive solidity beneath it. The adjective, remember, is only in the most cunning hands a source of strength. Of its very nature it qualifies, and qualification, by defining one quality to the exclusion of

others, diminishes the suggestive power of the naked noun. Never forget that if nouns are the flesh of the body of language, verbs are the bones that give its primary form. The strength of a language lies in its verbs, and with a language as rich as ours in verbs, there are few things that an adroit use of this wealth cannot express even to the finer shades of meaning. Herein, as I believe, rests the secret of strong and sinewy prose.

"(3) Preciousness.—Do not keep on reminding your reader what a clever fellow you are and what a lot you know about all kinds of subjects beside the one on which you are writing. Your accomplishments, except so far as they concern the thing you are writing about, don't interest him, and may even bore him, and he'll be far more pleasantly aware of your personality (if that's what you're anxious he shouldn't miss) if you don't ram it down his throat. There's no need to call attention to yourself if only yourself be sufficiently interesting. Therefore, as a matter of principle, never use a long, uncommon word if a short, common one will express your meaning equally well, as in 999 cases out of a thousand it will. Never use a foreign word if an English one will do. Never use a word of Romance origin with a reach-me-down termination which it shares with a hundred others when the simpler and more vital Saxon can do the work more vigorously and cleanly. As verbs are the backbone of style, so words of Saxon derivation are the backbone of our language. They have, nearly all of them, the virtue of being short as well as expressive; and if you can say the same thing in five letters, why use twenty?

"These are all elementary vices; but I call attention to them because they mock me when I read my own early work; and I have no doubt that if I approached my latest

writing I should find them flourishing less luxuriously but with the same grim persistence. My consciousness of this prevents me from offering, as you suggest, a paragraph of my own writing as anything but an example of the weaknesses which betray an author who has spent the greater part of his life in trying to achieve a simple and beautiful prose-style; not even your kind reminder that such an example might increase the desire of your students to read my work can persuade me to face the humiliation which I should be certain to feel.

"Advice on the subject of reading? Your libraries offer your students the whole field of English prose, from the Seventeenth Century Mystics, Fielding, Defoe and Sterne, to its latest and most exquisite uses in the hands of Pater, W. H. Hudson, Doughty, and the later George Moore. Let them read what they will and be thankful for the beauty that they find; but, if technique rather than amusement be their object, let them read always critically. For there is no such thing as sheer perfection in our art, and every real writer, as he reads, is re-writing the page before him. And never forget, behind the whole body of English prose, the book which I believe to be the summit of its achievement to this day: the Authorized Version of the Bible."

—Francis Brett Young.

DAYBREAK AT PANDA [1]

Within the land-locked anchorage of Panda, an hour before daybreak, darkness weighed dense and palpable as a cloud; a low cloud, ebbing seaward in the last breath of the night's down-river air, moving so stealthily that the casuarina trees, whose whole existence is one tremulous commotion, gave no shiver as it passed through their invisible tresses.

The water lay void and formless, part neither of earth nor sky, like some lake in a world scarcely created and innocent of life. The land drowsed, in a strained, conscious silence, for the moon, which had lately stirred the inhabitants of swamp and *shamba* into an uneasy life, had set; mute, exhausted, yet wary, it awaited the first signal of returning day.

Suddenly it came. From the flat shoals that fringed the island of Vumba a flight of flamingos took the air. Obedient to a secret, unanimous impulse, driven from their nocturnal pasture by some feather-sense of approaching dawn, they rose and hurried landward, ruffling the coverlet of darkness with their creaking wings, waking the hushed waters in their passage. They passed, and through the torn film of silence issued a watery sound, as though the ripple of their emergence lapped the dumb roots of the mangroves. The casuarinas shuddered; the lofty plumes of the coconuts gave a dry shiver. A single bird, deep in the rubber plantations, set up a thin and plaintive piping; grasses stirred, then branches; a heavy body launched itself into the shallows with a sucking splash; and so, in an aggregation of echo on echo and restless sound on sound, the estuary awoke to a torrent of bird-song.

As yet there was no light; only a thinning in the darkness,

[1] Reprinted from *Sea Horses* by permission of the author, and James B. Pinker and Son.

that, drifting eastward, was curled back and lifted from the lip of the horizon. Gradually, quickened by light that came from some invisible source, the margin of water detached itself from the thickness of land. It lay like an irregular pool of spilt ink in which the miracle of creation was re-enacted; for, from its edges, rose fantastic shapes of earth and trees that were like monsters emerging from slime. Among these, huge against the steely levels of sea, loomed the whaleback of Vumba Island, closing the anchorage to eastward.

Moment by moment, as though the lines of the land were being boldly remodelled by the fingers of some celestial artist moving from that dark nucleus, the form of the neighbouring coast became defined. On the southerly side of the strait, the snout of the mainland, Ras M'zinga, thrust out like the upper jaw of a sleeping crocodile; on its extremity, a fantastic afterthought, rose the conical pillar of Vasco di Gama and the sinister bulk of the Fort of Jesus, threatening two seas. Gradually, on the flat concave of the promontory, a patch of smoky pallor resolved itself into the cubical masses of Panda itself, old, grey, desolate; a town that had died in its sleep, if, indeed, it had ever lived.

So it seemed in that unkindly light; but as night rolled sullenly backward into the fastnesses of the delta, the face of the town became less ghastly. The sun rose. Through its narrow streets warmth flowed like a returning circulation, bringing colour into the blanched features of the houses, which now showed themselves plastered with pink stucco, roofed with red tiles and eyed with shuttered windows. A bell jangled violently within a church that was all façade, fronting the Avenida da Republica; white pigeons, scared from their roosts in the belfry, fluttered out like a drift of petals. Down the centre of an avenue a dog with a long curled tail dragged its hind-quarters to a patch of white sand on which sun gleamed between the pillars of the mangoes. He yawned, flapped his tail, rolled over to sleep. His day had begun. The bell ceased its jangle. Inside the church a priest had begun to say mass; but the door was

closed as fast as those of the pink-washed houses with their shuttered windows, and his voice seemed a lonely and feeble protest against the somnolence of centuries.

Only on the northern edge of the town, where high garden walls ended and the sea began, the pulse of life visibly quickened. There, on the edge of the shining harbour, a breeze was steadily filling the plumes of the casuarinas with a sound of sea breaking on fine shingle and swaying the pendant air-roots of an avenue of ficus. Beneath their shadow a single native came running with long, lithe strides, scattering, as he passed, a group of white-breasted crows that pecked and trailed their feathers in the dust. Panting, with open mouth, he turned the corner of the Avenida, and hammered at the door of one of the pink houses above which the royal arms of Portugal had been clumsily obliterated with a daub of whitewash. The door opened; another native, in a long white gown, to whom he imparted a message, appeared. Then, his day's work completed, he slunk away into the shade of the mangoes and threw himself down on the earth, still panting, within a few feet of the sleeping dog.

But from that moment Panda really awoke. All along the street shutters were opened and dark eyes peered vaguely through the iron grilles. The priest, in his long soutane, flapped over from the church like a shabby vulture, entering the house at which the messenger had knocked. A minute later, from the same floor, a figure in uniform importantly emerged. He passed along the avenue towards the sea, and behind him, at irregular intervals, the whole official population of Panda streamed downward to the shore of white sand on which boats were beached. They stood there, talking and gesticulating, pointing excitedly to the gleaming line of sea between Vumba Island and Ras M'zinga across which the bar that the early Portuguese had named Cavallos Marinhos showed a streak of broken water. Beyond it, stationary, as it seemed, in a lake of fire, the tall silhouette of a steamer was seen.

NORMAN DOUGLAS

Novelist

Again and again, all through the history of English literature the story is repeated of the struggles and disappointments of writers who wish to make their names in the literary world. Not until Mr. Douglas was forty-nine, when *South Wind* was published, did he receive any of that recognition that an author most desires. Now he is known only by that book. Another, *Siren Land*, is perhaps as praiseworthy. Once he spent a year trying to get someone to publish it and when it was published his royalties were less than sixty dollars and many copies were pulped. Now its worth is recognized and one copy of the first edition sells for nearly as much as the whole sum of his first royalties.

Mr. Douglas has been in diplomatic service and, for a number of years, has lived in Italy.

In responding to *The Modern Library's* courteous request that I should write a short prefatory notice to this edition of *South Wind*, I will take the opportunity to answer one or two correspondents who have assumed that my island of Nepenthe is that of Capri near Naples—and this, in spite of the fact that Nepenthe is described in the very first chapter as being near Africa. They write, for instance, "the real Capri is not the Capri I was led to expect from your book"; or else, "I don't see any traces of the hot springs you mention"; or, still more pointedly, "Damned if I can trace much likeness between the two."

Of course there is not much likeness between them.

The island of Capri is real, and Nepenthe is two-thirds imaginary. And the remaining third of it is distilled out of several Mediterranean islands; it is a composite place. Certain social features, as well as the prevalence of the sirocco, are—or were—fairly true of Capri; the hot springs and their medicinal virtues have been concocted out of old Iasolini's funny account of the island of Ischia (1588); the volcanic cliff-scenery and all the peculiar mineralogical characteristics are those of the island of Ponza concerning which, in days gone by, I wrote an illustrated article and sent it to the editor of *Scribner's Magazine* who was kind enough to pay me, though he never printed what I had written; I can also detect, here and there, reminiscences of the Lipari islands, such as the decayed bathing establishment mentioned in Chapter XXVII which was inspired by the then abandoned baths of San Calogero on Lipari, and the local pumice-stone industry (p. 99) in the village of Canneto where they used to carry monstrous blocks of this light material down the mountainside on their backs, before mechanical means of transport were introduced.

The same with the personages. Several friends, who know Capri well, declare that they have "identified everybody in the book, including yourself." Clever people! To the best of my knowledge, the characters of Caloveglia, van Koppen, the "good Duke," Eames, Keith and Don Francesco (the only respectable person in the whole crowd: and I take some credit to myself for making him a Roman Catholic priest) are pure inventions. I have never met men of this kind; I should like to do so. In the case of others, some memories may well have been floating at the back of my mind. Bashakuloff, for example, is obviously derived from Rasputin and another holy Russian impostor whose name I cannot recall; I must also confess that Signor

Malipizzo is meant for an unflattering portrait of the then existing magistrate on Capri, a red-haired ruffian called Capolozzi, who nearly had me in the lock-up once or twice; this caricature was the best I could do, by way of being square with him. The bishop, as I have elsewhere explained, is merely a dummy contrived to reflect the moods of what I took to be the average reader.

And Miss Wilberforce—what of her? A lady wrote me that I painted her "with so much feeling" that she could not be anything but a near connection of my own family. I wish she were! As a matter of fact, Miss Wilberforce has been put together out of some twelve dames of that particular alcoholic temperament whom it has been my privilege to know, and each of whom has contributed her mite; she is a synthetic lady-sot—a type I fervently pray God may never die out. One of her dozen ingredients moved in the upper strata of English society and was so passionately addicted to strong waters that it became a doubtful pleasure to sit next to her at a dinner table or anywhere else. And yet, alas, she never indulged in Miss Wilberforce's playful habit of divesting herself of her raiment on occasion. I suppose she thought that an Ambassadress should draw the line somewhere. Which was a pity.

I will only add, as a conclusion to this absurdly egotistical preface, and to console anyone who proposes to write books of this kind, that the critics were not encouraging, not very encouraging. Many reviewers declared themselves unable to find the slightest semblance of a "plot" in *South Wind*, which annoyed me so furiously that in a subsequent book called *Alone I* told them what I thought of them and their perspicacity and proved, to my own complete satisfaction, that *South Wind* is nothing but

plot from beginning to end. Again: a well-known London paper observed blandly that "Readers with time on their hands might give it a trial." Now I call that a damper. And it strikes me that Mr. Liveright must be a bold man, for in putting this book into his *The Modern Library* series he seems to take it for granted that there must be a considerable number of readers with time on their hands, ready to "give it a trial" in America.

I hope he is not mistaken.

—Norman Douglas.[1]

[1] Introduction to *South Wind*, reprinted from *The Modern Library* edition by permission of the publishers.

SOUTH WIND [1]

Mr. Heard was not prone to wax enthusiastic over the delights of architecture or natural scenery. He called himself unexpansive and unromantic; he confessed to small understanding, small veneration, for artistic effects. The beauty of a man's character moved him more strongly than the beauty of any picture or any landscape. Yet, on arriving next afternoon at the upper plateau of Nepenthe he could not help being struck by the strange and almost compelling charm of the "Old Town." It was so different from the lower regions—so calm and reposeful.

Down below, in that more accessible modern settlement, everything was bright and many-tinted; there was movement and noise and colour; a dazzling spot! The subtle influence of the sea, though it lay four hundred feet lower down, was ever present; one felt oneself on an island. On reaching these heights that feeling evaporated. You were embowered in mighty trees, in the midst of which stood the Old Town.

Unlike that other one, it faced due north; it lay, moreover, a few hundred feet higher up. That alone could not have explained the difference in temperature, one might say in climate, between the two. To begin with, there was on this tiny upland basin exceptionally deep soil, borne down by the rains of unnumbered centuries from the heights overhead and enabling those shady oaks, poplars, walnuts and apples to shoot up to uncommon size and luxuriance and screen away the sunny beams. From above, meanwhile, a perennial shower descended. The moisture-laden sirocco, tearing itself to shreds against the riven summits of the high southern cliffs, dripped ceaselessly

[1] From *South Wind* by Norman Douglas. Reprinted by permission of the author.

upon this verdant oasis in clouds of invisible dew. You could often enjoy the luxury of a shiver, at nighttime, in the Old Town.

It was a stronghold originally; built on these heights for the greater security of the islanders against Saracenic inroads. When a more peaceful era drew nigh the population began to decline; they found it more convenient to establish themselves in the new settlement lower down. Then came the Good Duke Alfred—that potentate who, as Mr. Eames was wont to say, *nihil quod tetigit non ornavit.* He took a fancy to this quaint old citadel which, before his day, could only be reached by a rough mule track easily defended against invaders. After constructing a fine road of access with many twists and turnings, wide enough to admit the passage of two of his roomy state carriages driving abreast, he turned his mind to other improvements. Professing to be an admirer of the good old times, he decided to keep up its traditional character—it was to remain a fortress, in appearance if not reality. A massive crenellated rampart, furnished with four gateways and watch-towers at convenient intervals but serving no purpose in particular, grew up around the place; every one of its houses which failed to fit in with the design of this battlemented structure—and there were a good many of them—was ruthlessly demolished. The Old Town was enclosed in a ring.

Desirous, next, of putting an end to the annoying exodus of the natives, he fixed by law the number of inhabitants; there were to be five hundred souls, neither more nor less. If in any one year the population exceeded that figure, the surplus was taken away, from among the adult males, to work as galley-slaves in his fleet; a deficiency in the requisite number was met by giving new husbands from the lower town, often three or four at a time "with a view to ensuring good results," to those of the native women who had hitherto failed to produce offspring. The system worked well. With some trifling but reprehensive fluctuations, the birth-rate and death-rate remained even; things were at a standstill; a fact which caused

His Highness to be compared, by a courtly panegyrist, to Joshua who bade the sun arrest his march across the heavens. Another of these gentlemen calls the Duke's action a "triumph of art over nature," adding, not without a grain of malice, that "never have the generative capacities of mankind adapted themselves with more conspicuous success to the shape of an unnecessary wall." Monsignor Perrelli, unfortunately, has nothing whatever to say on the subject. For reasons which will appear anon, he is remarkably silent on all that concerns the reign of his great contemporary.

Even so the Prince was not satisfied. The fastness was yet imperfect; he disliked the variegated hues of the buildings—they reminded him of the garish brilliance in the lower town. Something different had to be contrived. He took thought and, being a man of taste and a decorist where picturesque effects were concerned, decreed that the entire place—walls, houses, the two convents (Benedictine and Carthusian) the church, and even stables and pigsties—was to be painted a uniform pink: "pink," he ordained, "without the slightest admixture of blue." He desired, in fact, a kind of rose or flesh colour, a particular tint which, he foresaw, would look well among the luscious verdure of the surroundings. His behest, as usual, was obeyed without much loss of time.

Then he surveyed his work, and saw that it was good. He had created a gem. The Old Town was a symphony in emerald and coral.

So it remained. The inhabitants grew to be proud of their rosy citadel; it was an unwritten law among them that every new house should adapt itself to this tone. For the rest, there was not much building done after his death, with the exception of a few isolated villas that sprang up, despite his old commands, in the neighborhood. And the decline in population once more set in. Men forsook the place—all save the peasantry who tilled the surrounding fields. Towers and battlements crumbled to earth; roadways heaved uneasily with grassy tufts that sprouted in the chinks of the old paving-blocks.

Sometimes at decline of day a creaking hay-wagon would lumber along, bending towards a courtyard in whose moss-grown recesses you discerned stacks of golden maize and pumpkins; apples and plum-trees, nodding drowsily over walls, littered the streets with snowy blossoms or fallen leaves. Commercial life was extinct. The few remaining shopkeepers wore an air of slumberous benevolence. The very stones suggested peace. A mellow and aristocratic flavour clung to those pink dwellings that nestled, world-forgotten, in a green content . . .

One of those few modern houses was the Villa Mon Repos. There was a curious history attached to the place. It had been built about a century ago at the orders of an eccentric French lady, a lyric poetess, who professed to be tired of life. She had heard that somewhere on Nepenthe was a towering precipice, unique of its kind and convenient for suicidal purposes. She thought she would like to live near that precipice—it might come in handy. There was nothing of the right sort in Paris, she declared; only five-storey hotels and suchlike; the notion of casting herself down from one of those artificial eminences did not appeal to her high-strung temperament; she craved to die like Sappho, her ideal. An architect was despatched, the ground purchased, the house built and furnished. That done, she settled up her affairs in France and established herself at Mon Repos. On the evening of her arrival she climbed the little height at the back of her domain and looked southward, down a sheer wall of rock eight or nine hundred feet high, over the wrinkled ocean. It made her feel queer. Further familiarity with the precipice did not breed contempt; her visits to the site became rarer and rarer. She died, at a patriarchal age, in her bed, after writing a scholarly pamphlet to prove that the tale of Sappho's leap over her famous silvery crag was a myth, the "purest sensationalism," a fable of the grammarians "hopelessly irreconcilable with what we know of that great woman's character."

This much the bishop had learnt from Mr. Keith. That gentleman liked the Sappho story; he called it absolutely true

to human nature and so creditable to the old lady's intelligence that he would have insisted upon paying his respects to her had she not expired a good many years before his arrival on the island. And he, of course, got it from Eames who, as annotator of Perrelli's *Antiquities*, was in the habit of garnering odd details anent private houses and so forth, and had possessed himself, in the course of his researches, of this particular pamphlet which he intended to reprint, together with others of its kind, in an appendix entitled, "Contemporary Social History."

The driving road terminated at the Old Town. Mr. Heard, descending from his carriage, followed a pathway which had been described to him by Denis and soon found himself at the entrance of the Villa Mon Repos. It was an inconspicuous little place, surrounded by three or four chestnut trees and a rose garden. A steep incline at the back of the property ended, abruptly, in air. He concluded that the precipice must be on the other side of that slope and that, if so, it was rather too near the house for his taste. Mr. Heard thoroughly understood the feelings of the French poetess. He, too, was not fond of precipices. It was as much as he could do to look down from a church tower without growing dizzy.

On the house-steps, beside an empty cradle, sat a shrivelled hag—a gaunt, forbidding anatomy, with hooked nose and brown skin. Tousled grey hair, with a look like that of a Skye terrier, hung over her forehead, half concealing a pair of coal-black eyes. She rose up, barred the entrance with one claw-like hand, and scrutinized him distrustfully.

"A Cerberus!" he thought. "This must be the old lady who understands Hindustani. Now I wonder if she knows English?"

She seemed to understand that language too; or perhaps his kindly face disposed her in his favour. He was allowed to pass within.

The house was empty. Mrs. Meadows had presumably gone out for a ramble, taking the child with her. He sat down and waited, glancing round the premises. It was a peaceful sort of abode, pervaded by a strong sense of home. It appealed

to the bishop, who had domestic instincts, and, despite his youth, was already a little weary of tossing about the world. He envied his cousin's happy married life. Would such an existence ever fall to his own lot? Although, like himself, she was only a bird of passage on Nepenthe, she had succeeded in impressing her personality upon those rather scantily furnished rooms and filling them with an atmosphere of England. Heavy bowls of fresh roses were ranged about. But what was she like after all these years? Would she recognize him? Had she heard of his arrival on the island?

Mrs. Meadows failed to return. Perhaps she had met some friend or neighbor who was keeping her to dinner together with the child. The old woman seemed unwilling to or else unable to give him any information as to her whereabouts. After waiting an hour, he scribbled a short note, left it on the writing table and took his leave. The eyes of that fierce creature followed him right out of the garden. So did the scent of roses. . . .

VIRGINIA WOOLF

Novelist, story-writer

"The mind receives a myriad impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel." Realizing that, Mrs. Woolf's concern is to put on paper these myriad impressions. This is sometimes called the stream-of-consciousness method. Her pictures of her characters and what is passing in their minds succeed so well in this purpose that they attain the effect of being engraved "with the sharpness of steel." One thing that helps in the concentration of this sharpness is Mrs. Woolf's usual observance of the Greek unities. With more characters or more places or a longer time in her novels, she would fail to accomplish it.

Mrs. Woolf is the daughter of the late Sir Leslie Stephen. Her husband is Mr. Leonard Sidney Woolf, once literary editor of the *Nation and Athenæum*. They direct the Hogarth Press. In *The Common Reader* there are two essays, "The Modern Essay" and "Modern Fiction," which discuss the art of writing. In the latter she criticizes modern realistic methods. The paragraph which is quoted here is from that essay.

Look within and life, it seems, is very far from being "like this." Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions —trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old; the moment of im-

portance came not here but there; so that, if a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street tailors would have it. Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? We are not pleading merely for courage and sincerity; we are suggesting that the proper stuff of fiction is a little other than custom would have us believe it.

—VIRGINIA WOOLF.[1]

[1] Quoted from "Modern Fiction," in *The Common Reader*. Reprinted by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.

MRS. DALLOWAY[1]

The violent explosion which made Mrs. Dalloway jump and Miss Pym go to the window and apologise came from a motor car which had drawn to the side of the pavement precisely opposite Mulberry's shop window. Passers-by who, of course, stopped and stared, had just time to see a face of the very greatest importance against the dove-grey upholstery, before a male hand drew the blind and there was nothing to be seen except a square of dove grey.

Yet rumours were at once in circulation from the middle of Bond Street to Oxford Street on one side, to Atkinson's scent shop on the other, passing invisibly, inaudibly, like a cloud, swift, veil-like upon hills, falling indeed with something of a cloud's sudden sobriety and stillness upon faces which a second before had been utterly disorderly. But now mystery had brushed them with her wing; they had heard the voice of authority; the spirit of religion was abroad with her eyes bandaged tight and her lips gaping wide. But nobody knew whose face had been seen. Was it the Prince of Wales's, the Queen's, the Prime Minister's? Whose face was it? Nobody knew.

Edgar J. Watkiss, with his roll of lead piping round his arm, said audibly, humorously of course: "The Proime Minister's kyar."

Septimus Warren Smith, who found himself unable to pass, heard him.

Septimus Warren Smith, aged about thirty, pale-faced, beak-nosed, wearing brown shoes and a shabby overcoat, with hazel eyes which had that look of apprehension in them which makes complete strangers apprehensive too. The world has raised its whip; where will it descend?

[1] Reprinted from *Mrs. Dalloway*, pp. 19–29, by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.

Everything had come to a standstill. The throb of the motor engines sounded like a pulse irregularly drumming through an entire body. The sun became extraordinarily hot because the motor car had stopped outside Mulberry's shop window; old ladies on the tops of omnibuses spread their black parasols; here a green, here a red parasol opened with a little pop. Mrs. Dalloway, coming to the window with her arms full of sweet peas, looked out with her little pink face pursed in enquiry. Every one looked at the motor car. Septimus looked. Boys on bicycles sprang off. Traffic accumulated. And there the motor car stood, with drawn blinds, and upon them a curious pattern like a tree, Septimus thought, and this gradual drawing together of everything to one centre before his eyes, as if some horror had come almost to the surface and was about to burst into flames, terrified him. The world wavered and quivered and threatened to burst into flames. It is I who am blocking the way, he thought. Was he not being looked at and pointed at; was he not weighted there, rooted to the pavement, for a purpose? But for what purpose?

"Let us go on, Septimus," said his wife, a little woman, with large eyes in a sallow pointed face; an Italian girl.

But Lucrezia herself could not help looking at the motor car and the tree pattern on the blinds. Was it the Queen in there—the Queen going shopping?

The chauffeur, who had been opening something, turning something, shutting something, got on to the box.

"Come on," said Lucrezia.

But her husband, for they had been married four, five years now, jumped, started, and said, "All right!" angrily, as if she had interrupted him.

People must notice; people must see. People, she thought, looking at the crowd staring at the motor car; the English people, with their children and their horses and their clothes, which she admired in a way; but they were "people" now, because Septimus had said, "I will kill myself"; an awful thing to say. Suppose they had heard him? She looked at the crowd.

Help, help, she wanted to cry out to butchers' boys and women. Help! Only last autumn she and Septimus had stood on the Embankment wrapped in the same cloak and, Septimus reading a paper instead of talking, she had snatched it from him and laughed in the old man's face who saw them! But failure one conceals. She must take him away into some park.

"Now we will cross," she said.

She had a right to his arm, though it was without feeling. He would give her, who was so simple, so impulsive, only twenty-four, without friends in England, who had left Italy for his sake, a piece of bone.

The motor car with its blinds drawn and an air of inscrutable reserve proceeded towards Piccadilly, still gazed at, still ruffling the faces on both sides of the street with the same dark breath of veneration whether for Queen, Prince, or Prime Minister nobody knew. The face itself had been seen only once by three people for a few seconds. Even the sex was now in dispute. But there could be no doubt that greatness was seated within; greatness was passing, hidden, down Bond Street, removed only by a hand's-breadth from ordinary people who might now, for the first and last time, be within speaking distance of the majesty of England, of the enduring symbol of the state which will be known to curious antiquaries, sifting the ruins of time, when London is a grass-grown path and all those hurrying along the pavement this Wednesday morning are but bones with a few wedding rings mixed up in their dust and the gold stoppings of innumerable decayed teeth. The face in the motor car will then be known.

It is probably the Queen, thought Mrs. Dalloway, coming out of Mulberry's with her flowers; the Queen. And for a second she wore a look of extreme dignity standing by the flower shop in the sunlight while the car passed at a foot's pace, with its blinds drawn. The Queen going to some hospital; the Queen opening some bazaar, thought Clarissa.

The crush was terrific for the time of day. Lords, Ascot, Hurlingham, what was it? she wondered, for the street was

blocked. The British middle classes sitting sideways on the tops of omnibuses with parcels and umbrellas, yes, even furs on a day like this, were, she thought, more ridiculous, more unlike anything there has ever been than one could conceive; and the Queen herself held up; the Queen herself unable to pass. Clarissa was suspended on one side of Brook Street; Sir John Buckhurst, the old Judge on the other, with the car between them (Sir John had laid down the law for years and liked a well-dressed woman) when the chauffeur, leaning ever so slightly, said or showed something to the policeman, who saluted and raised his arm and jerked his head and moved the omnibus to the side and the car passed through. Slowly and very silently it took its way.

Clarissa guessed; Clarissa knew of course; she had seen something white, magical, circular, in the footman's hand, a disc inscribed with a name,—the Queen's, the Prince of Wales's, the Prime Minister's?—which, by force of its own lustre, burnt its way through (Clarissa saw the car diminishing, disappearing), to blaze among candelabras, glittering stars, breasts stiff with oak leaves, Hugh Whitbread and all his colleagues, the gentlemen of England, that night in Buckingham Palace. And Clarissa, too, gave a party. She stiffened a little; so she would stand at the top of her stairs.

The car had gone, but it had left a slight ripple which flowed through glove shops and hat shops and tailors' shops on both sides of Bond Street. For thirty seconds all heads were inclined the same way—to the window. Choosing a pair of gloves—should they be to the elbow or above it, lemon or pale grey?—ladies stopped; when the sentence was finished something had happened. Something so trifling in single instances that no mathematical instrument, though capable of transmitting shocks in China, could register the vibration; yet in its fulness rather formidable and in its common appeal emotional; for in all the hat shops and tailors' shops strangers looked at each other and thought of the dead; of the flag; of Empire. In a public house in a back street a Colonial insulted the House of Windsor which

led to words, broken beer glasses, and a general shindy, which echoed strangely across the way in the ears of girls buying white underlinen threaded with pure white ribbon for their weddings. For the surface agitation of the passing car as it sunk grazed something very profound.

Gliding across Piccadilly, the car turned down St. James's Street. Tall men, men of robust physique, well-dressed men with their tail-coats and their white slips and their hair raked back who, for reasons difficult to discriminate, were standing in the bow window of Brooks's with their hands behind the tails of their coats, looking out, perceived instinctively that greatness was passing, and the pale light of the immortal presence fell upon them as it had fallen upon Clarissa Dalloway. At once they stood even straighter, and removed their hands, and seemed ready to attend their Sovereign, if need be, to the cannon's mouth, as their ancestors had done before them. The white busts and the little tables in the background covered with copies of the *Tatler* and syphons of soda water seemed to approve; seemed to indicate the flowing corn and the manor houses of England; and to return the frail hum of the motor wheels as the walls of a whispering gallery return a single voice expanded and made sonorous by the might of a whole cathedral. Shawled Moll Pratt with her flowers on the pavement wished the dear boy well (it was the Prince of Wales for certain) and would have tossed the price of a pot of beer—a bunch of roses—into St. James's Street out of sheer light-heartedness and contempt of poverty had she not seen the constable's eye upon her, discouraging an old Irishwoman's loyalty. The sentries at St. James's saluted; Queen Alexandra's policeman approved.

A small crowd meanwhile had gathered at the gates of Buckingham Palace. Listlessly, yet confidently, poor people all of them, they waited; looked at the Palace itself with the flag flying; at Victoria, billowing on her mound, admired her shelves of running water, her geraniums; singled out from the motor cars in the Mall first this one, then that; bestowed emotion, vainly, upon commoners out for a drive; recalled their tribute to keep

it unspent while this car passed and that; and all the time let rumour accumulate in their veins and thrill the nerves in their thighs at the thought of Royalty looking at them; the Queen bowing; the Prince saluting; at the thought of the heavenly life divinely bestowed upon Kings; of the equerries and deep curtsies; of the Queen's old doll's house; of Princess Mary married to an Englishman, and the Prince—ah! the Prince! who took wonderfully, they said, after old King Edward, but was ever so much slimmer. The Prince lived at St. James's; but he might come along in the morning to visit his mother.

So Sarah Bletchley said with her baby in her arms, tipping her foot up and down as though she were by her own fender in Pimlico, but keeping her eyes on the Mall, while Emily Coates ranged over the Palace windows and thought of the housemaids, the innumerable housemaids, the bedrooms, the innumerable bedrooms. Joined by an elderly gentleman with an Aberdeen terrier, by men without occupation, the crowd increased. Little Mr. Bowley, who had rooms in the Albany and was sealed with wax over the deeper sources of life but could be unsealed suddenly, inappropriately, sentimentally, by this sort of thing—poor women waiting to see the Queen go past—poor women, nice little children, orphans, widows, the War—tut-tut—actually had tears in his eyes. A breeze flaunting ever so warmly down the Mall through the thin trees, past the bronze heroes, lifted some flag flying in the British breast of Mr. Bowley and he raised his hat as the car turned into the Mall and held it high as the car approached; and let the poor mothers of Pimlico press close to him, and stood very upright. The car came on.

THORNTON WILDER

Novelist

In 1928, at the age of thirty, Mr. Wilder published a novel that attracted the favorable attention of most literary critics. They called it a thing of beauty. *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* was a relief from the usual trend of realism and naturalism.

Mr. Wilder was prominent in the literary circles of Yale when he was an undergraduate. For two years after graduation he was in Italy.

Mr. Wilder suggested the following pages for use in this text: "the opening of the *Cabala;* the description of the garden of an Italian villa—near the close of the *Cabala*—Book Two; or the fall of night in the French gardens—near the close of Uncle Pio's 'book' in *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*."

The Woman of Andros is his latest book.

It is a discouraging business to be an author at sixteen years of age. Such an author is all aspiration and no fulfillment. He is drunk on an imaginary kinship with the writers he most admires, and yet his poor overblotted notebooks show nothing to prove to others, or to himself, that the claim is justified. The shortest walk in the country is sufficient to start in his mind the theme, the plan and the title, especially the title, of a long book; and the shortest hour when he has returned to his desk is sufficient to deflate his ambition. Such fragments as he is finally able to commit to paper are a mass of echoes, awkward relative clauses and conflicting styles. In life and in literature mere sincerity is not sufficient, and in both

realms the greater the capacity the longer the awkward age. Yet strange lights cross that confusion, authoritative moments that all the practice of later maturity cannot explain and cannot recapture. He is visited by great depressions and wild exhilarations, but whether his depressions proceed from his limitations in the art of living or his limitations in the art of writing he cannot tell. An artist is one who knows how life should be lived at its best and is always aware of how badly he is doing it. An artist is one who knows he is failing in living and feeds his remorse by making something fair, and a layman is one who suspects he is failing in living but is consoled by his successes in golf, or in love, or in business.

Authors of fifteen and sixteen years of age spend their time drawing up title-pages and adjusting the tables of contents of works they have neither the perseverance nor the ability to execute. They compass easily all the parts of a book that are inessential. They compose dignified prefaces, discover happy quotations from the Latin and the French, and turn graceful dedications. This book is what is left of one of these projects.

The title was to have been *Three-Minute Plays for Three Persons*. I have lately found one of my early tables of contents for it, written in the fly-leaves of a First Year Algebra. Quadratics in those days could be supported only with the help of a rich marginal commentary. Usually these aids to education took the shape of a carefully planned repertory for two theaters, a large and a small. Here my longer plays were to alternate with *The Wild Duck* and *Measure for Measure* and were cast with such a roll of great names as neither money nor loyalty could assemble. The chapter on Combinations and Permutations ended short by several inches, and left me sufficient space to draw up a catalogue of all the compositions I had heard

of that were the work of Charles Martin Loeffler. This list of *Three-Minute Plays* was drawn up in Berkeley, California, in the spring of 1915. It contains several that have since been rejected, two that are in the present volume, "Brother Fire" and "Prosperina and the Devil," and the names of many that were unwritten then and that still, through the charm of their titles, ask to be written.

Since then I have composed some forty of these plays, for I had discovered a literary form that satisfied my passion for compression. Since the time when I began to read I had become aware of the needless repetition, the complacency in most writing. Who does not know the empty opening paragraphs, the deft but uninstructive transitions, and the closing paragraphs that summarize a work and which are unnecessary to an alert reader? Moreover, their brevity flatters my inability to sustain a long flight, and the inertia that barely permits me to write at all. And finally, when I became a teacher, here was the length that could be compassed after the lights of the House were out and the sheaf of absurd French exercises corrected and indignantly marked with red crayon. In time the three minutes and the three persons became a habit, and no idea was too grandiose—as the reader will see—for me to try and invest it in this strange discipline.

There were other plans for this book. There was to have been a series of Footnotes to Biographies, suggested by Herbert Eulenberg's *Schattenbilder*, represented here by the Mozart, the Ibsen, and the St. Francis plays. There were hopes of a still more difficult series. Dürer's two sets of woodcuts illustrating the Passion were to serve as model for a series of plays that would be meditations on the last days of Our Lord. Two of them are in this book. There was to have been a series illustrating the history of the

stage, and again, two of them are in this book. How different the practice of writing would be if one did not permit oneself to be pretentious. Some hands have no choice: they would rather fail with an oratorio than succeed with a ballad.

During the years that these plays were being written I was reading widely, and these pages are full of allusions to it. The art of literature springs from two curiosities, a curiosity about human beings pushed to such an extreme that it resembles love, and a love of a few masterpieces of literature so absorbing that it has all the richest elements of curiosity. I use the word *curiosity* in the French sense of a tireless awareness of things. (It is too late to arrest the deterioration of our greatest English words. We live in an age where *pity* and *charity* have taken on the color of condescensions; where *humility* seems to mean an acknowledgment of failure; where *simplicity* is foolishness and *curiosity* is interference. To-day *hope*, and *faith* itself, imply a deliberate self-deception.) The training for literature must be acquired by the artist alone, through the passionate assimilation of a few masterpieces written from a spirit somewhat like his own, and of a few masterpieces written from a spirit not at all like his own. I read all Newman, and then I read all Swift. The technical processes of literature should be acquired almost unconsciously on the tide of a great enthusiasm, even syntax, even sentence-struction; I should like to hope, even spelling. I am thinking of some words of Renan commenting in the *Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse* upon his education: "*Pour moi, (je) crois que la meilleure manière de former des jeunes gens de talent est de ne jamais leur parler de talent ni de style, mais de les instruire et d'exciter ortement leur esprit sur les questions philosophiques, religieuses, politiques, sociales, scientifiques, historiques; en un*

mot, de procéder par l'enseinement du fond des choses, et non par l'enseignement d'une creuse rhétorique."

The last four plays here have been written within a year and a half. Almost all the plays in this book are religious, but religious in that dilute fashion that is a believer's concession to a contemporary standard of good manners. But these four plant their flag as boldly as they may. It is the kind of work that I would most like to do well, in spite of the fact that there has seldom been an age in literature when such a vein was less welcome and less understood. I hope, through many mistakes, to discover the spirit that is not unequal to the elevation of the great religious themes, yet which does not fall into a repellent didacticism. Didacticism is an attempt at the coercion of another's free mind, even though one knows that in these matters beyond logic, beauty is the only persuasion. Here the schoolmaster enters again. He sees all that is fairest in the Christian tradition made repugnant to the new generations by reason of the diction in which it is expressed. The intermittent sincerity of generations of clergymen and teachers have rendered embarrassing and even ridiculous all the terms of the spiritual life. Nothing succeeds in dampening the aspirations of the young to-day—who dares use the word "aspiration" without enclosing it, knowingly, in quotation-marks?—like the names they hear given to them. The revival of religion is almost a matter of rhetoric. The work is difficult, perhaps impossible (perhaps all religions die out with the exhaustion of the language), but it at least reminds us that Our Lord asked us in His work to be not only as gentle as doves, but as wise as serpents.

—THORNTON WILDER.[1]

[1] Foreword to *The Angel That Troubled the Waters* by Thornton Wilder. Coypright 1928, Coward-McCann, Inc.

UNCLE PIO[1]

The French Gardens were at the southern end of the town. Behind them rose the higher Andes and before them there was a parapet overlooking a deep valley and overlooking wave after wave of hills that stretched toward the Pacific. It was the hour when bats fly low and the smaller animals play recklessly underfoot. A few solitaries lingered about the gardens, gazing dreamily into the sky that was being gradually emptied of its colour, or leaned upon the balustrade and looked down into the valley, noting in which village a dog was barking. It was the hour when the father returns home from the fields and plays for a moment in the yard with the dog that jumps upon him, holding his muzzle closed or throwing him upon his back. The young girls look about for the first star to fix a wish upon it, and the boys grow restless for supper. Even the busiest mother stands for a moment idle-handed, smiling at her dear and exasperating family.

Uncle Pio stood against one of the chipped marble benches and watched Camila coming towards him:

"I am late," she said. "I am sorry. What is it you wish to say to me?"

"Camila,—" he began.

"My name is Doña Micæla."

"I do not wish to offend you, Doña Micæla, but when you let me call you Camila for twenty years, I should think—"

"Oh, do as you like. Do as you like."

"Camila, promise me that you will listen to me. Promise me that you will not run away at my first sentence."

At once she burst out with unexpected passion: "Uncle Pio, listen to me. You are mad if you think you can make me return

[1] From *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, pp. 188–194. Reprinted by permission of Albert and Charles Boni, Inc., publishers.

to the theatre. I look back at the theatre with horror. Understand that. The theatre! The theatre, indeed! The daily payment of insults in that filthy place. Understand that you are wasting your time."

He answered gently: "I would not have you come back if you are happy with these new friends."

"You don't like my new friends, then?" she answered quickly. "Whom do you offer me in their stead?"

"Camila, I only remember . . ."

"I will not be criticized. I don't want any advice. It will be cold in a moment, I must go back to my house. Just give me up, that's all. Just put me out of your mind."

"Dear Camila, don't be angry. Let me talk to you. Just suffer me for ten minutes."

He did not understand why she was weeping. He did not know what to say. He talked at random: "You never even come to see the theatre, and they all notice it. The audiences are falling away now, too. They only put on the Old Comedy twice a week; all the other nights there are these new farces in prose. All is dull and childish and indecent. No one can speak Spanish any more. No one can even walk correctly any more. On Corpus Christi Day they gave *Belshazzar's Feast* where you were so wonderful. Now it was shameful."

There was a pause. A beautiful procession of clouds, like a flock of sheep, was straying up from the sea, slipping up the valleys between the hills. Camila suddenly touched his knee, and her face was like her face twenty years before: "Forgive me, Uncle Pio, for being so bad. Jaime was ill this afternoon. There's nothing one can do. He lies there, so white and . . . so surprised. One must think of other things. Uncle Pio, it would be no good if I went back to the theatre. The audiences come for the prose farces. We were foolish to try and keep alive the Old Comedy. Let people read the old plays in books if they choose to. It is not worth while fighting with the crowd."

"Wonderful Camila, I was not just to you when you were on the stage. It was some foolish pride in me. I grudged you the

praise that you deserved. Forgive me. You have always been a very great artist. If you come to see that you are not happy among these people you might think about going to Madrid. You would have a great triumph there. You are still young and beautiful. There will be time later to be called Doña Micæla. We shall be old soon. We shall be dead soon."

"No, I shall never see Spain. All the world is alike, Madrid or Lima."

"Oh, if we could go away to some island where the people would know you for yourself. And love you."

"You are fifty years old and you are still dreaming of such islands, Uncle Pio."

He bent his head and mumbled: "Of course I love you, Camila, as I always must and more than I can say. To have known you is enough for my whole life. You are a great lady now. And you are rich. There is no longer any way that I can help you. But I am always ready."

"How absurd you are," she said smiling. "You said that as boys say it. You don't seem to learn as you grow older, Uncle Pio. There is no such thing as that kind of love and that kind of island. It's in the theatre you find such things."

He looked shamefaced, but unconvinced.

At last she rose and said sadly: "What are we talking about! It is growing cold. I must be going in. You must be resigned. I have no heart for the theatre." There was a pause. "And for the rest? . . . Oh, I do not understand. It is just circumstance. I must be what I must. Do not try to understand either. Don't think about me, Uncle Pio. Just forgive, that's all. Just try to forgive."

She stood still a moment, searching for something deeply felt to say to him. The first cloud reached the terrace; it was dark; the last stragglers were leaving the gardens. She was thinking of Don Jaime, and of Don Andres and of himself. She could not find the words. Suddenly she bent down and kissed his fingers and went quickly away. But he sat for a long time in the gathering clouds trembling with happiness and trying to penetrate into the meaning of these things.

JAMES BOYD

Novelist, short-story writer

A critic and contemporary of James Boyd, Henry James Forman, expresses an appreciation of this author so adequately that nothing better can be done here than to quote him:

"James Boyd has an unmistakable gift for the writing of historical novels. But, better still, he has a genuine gift for the writing of novels. He never loses his head in the presence of detail or human emotions, and he sees everything in terms of pictures. Whether he is philosopher enough to see life steadily and see it whole, I do not know. But I do know that in reading his novel *Marching On* I see everything he desires me to see very clearly and unforgettably, and much, I fancy, as the author wishes me to see it. In that accomplishment lies talent of a high order. He writes, moreover, with that singular ease which may be very costly to the writer, or may possibly be due to a facility which never blots a line. One suspects, however, that his ease is dearly defrayed by ceaseless labor. But never for an instant is there the smell of the lamp. . . .

"Like Stephen Crane, he is concerned with pictures, etched impressions, as they fall upon the now more, now less sensitized surface of one man's brain." [1]

Mr. Boyd speaks with the knowledge of first-hand information. He lives in North Carolina, the state in which he places the Frasers. Moreover, unlike Stephen Crane, he is intimately acquainted with war, having been in action with the A.E.F. at St. Mihiel and the first and second Meuse-Argonne offensives.

The selections for this text were suggested by Mr. Boyd.

[1] Review of *Marching On*, from *New York Times Book Review*, May 1, 1927.

"I'm grateful at being asked merely to say something general about the importance of being able to use the English language rather than to give a simple rule or two which will enable aspirants to master the art by next Thursday afternoon. I get a good many requests like this last. And I answer that it is almost impossible to teach people how to write. The most that can be done is to persuade them how important it is not only for literary purposes but as part of their equipment for life that they should be able to write well. They will have to learn how for themselves. It is the only way they can learn.

"This, however, they are reluctant to believe. They think the ability to write good English is an easily acquired and trivial accomplishment. They do not like to regard it as fundamental and difficult. They cannot see that language is, practically, the sole means of communication between them and their fellow-men; that in business, in pleasure, in every relationship they are limited by their ability to use words.

"In business, for example, a major proportion of losses, lawsuits, and bad feeling arise from the inability of the average American business man to write or even read correctly. You may think this statement the fanciful condescension of a high-brow, but I make it soberly and after some experience as a business man. I should be safe in offering to bet even money that no transaction in this country involving four letters on each side can be consummated without an error due to the inability to write or read prose. I would win twice for every time I lost.

"The same condition is seen in social correspondence. It may not be so acutely emphasized because, in a letter to a friend, an individual's incompetence in expressing himself does not actually cost him money. It costs him

friends, however, and helps to produce what is hardly less than an American peculiarity. For it is strange that among a people as generous and cordial as ourselves deep and loyal friendships are uncommon. May one of the reasons not be that we are incapable of communicating our thoughts to each other?

"The same situation is seen in literature. America presents the largest and most profitable market for books and magazines that the world has so far known. And the number of writers who have ideas and technical skill in construction is very large. But the amount of clean-cut, vivid and economical writing is small. In consequence, we have more good second-raters, I imagine, than all Europe combined, but almost any foreign country can show more men and women of literary importance.

"All this is going to change, I have no doubt. How this change is to be brought about I do not know because I do not know how anyone, in business, in private correspondence or in literature learns to write—perhaps no one knows. All we do know is that the essence consists in first thinking what you want to say. If that sounds simple to anyone let him try it. It means reducing the vague idea in the mind to the most exact clearness of which that mind is capable. This alone is a feat; psychologists say few ever faintly approach the limit of their mental capacity in this direction. Having gone so far, the next task is to transfer this image into the one particular combination of words which, above all other thousand combinations possible, most nearly represents it. When you have done these two things in regard to any given idea you have written the best possible prose for that particular purpose. And this applies not only to high-brow and literary writing, but to all forms: business letters, committee reports, advertis-

ing matter. We may consider that the prose of *The Scarlet Letter* is more important than the prose of a customer's order for five hundred tons of fertilizer, but if the order is in language equally suited to its purpose the prose is intrinsically as good and may, so far as the customer and the fertilizer dealer are concerned, be quite as important.

"The reason why people cannot be taught to write is therefore this: the two principles—sharpening the image and picking the words—are things that a man must do mostly for himself and they are things which, though in the end they may become spontaneous, require in the beginning plenty of time. It is this lack in present American life of time for reflection and concentration which has kept the level of prose low in spite of the great increase in quality and quantity of education. And how little education matters compared to reflection and self-discipline can be shown by the fact that as great a master of prose as America has produced (a man who, incidentally, was raised not far from the present University of Illinois) received no formal education whatever. I mean, of course, Abraham Lincoln.

"There is another feature of the problem which can only be touched on here and need only be, as it applies chiefly to the phase of writing classed as literature. It arises from the fact that at best language as a medium of conveying ideas is relatively clumsy and crude. In the case of a perfectly simple idea this defect is not felt. The man who wants five hundred tons of fertilizer can find words perfectly suited to expressing this thought and even the more elaborate thoughts of how much cash he proposes to pay, what notes he proposes to give for the balance, and so forth. But in presenting Hester Prynne's thoughts on the attitude of the world, of God, and of herself towards

her act of supposed immorality, Hawthorne was confronted by ideas of a subtlety which, language being both arbitrary and rough-cast, he was by no means capable of producing in their entirety.

"Language is inadequate in proportion to the refinement of the idea. It is this fact, I imagine, which has generally given to the great writer a certain humility. His visions are seen with such harmonious intricacy, such wealth and precision of detail that all attempts to transfer them into language can only be deemed, and are deemed by himself, comparative failures. And it is this same condition which, in addition to humility, often gives him a certain almost contemptuous impatience with his admirers. This is mistaken for simple egoism or conceit whereas in fact it is a form of disappointment. He feels their praise to be unstinted only because they are incapable of perceiving how far the words they read have fallen short of the radiant picture in the writer's mind.

"The way in which the barrier between subtle thought and clumsy language is to some extent surmounted or even made the basis for writing of a more stimulating kind, is to abandon the attempt to reproduce the idea in detail and instead, using language not as a photographic plate but as a curtained window, to suggest merely the salient features of the scene with such economy and emphasis as will impel the reader to complete the picture for himself. This, of course, presupposes a certain creative ability on the reader's part, a certain spirited sympathy. It is here that an American writer may encounter difficulty. A national life which has left little time for its citizens to learn to write has left hardly more for them to learn to read. Not gaining or not being accustomed in this direction to gain pleasure out of efforts of the mind, spirit or

imagination they prefer a book where an idea as simple as the fertilizer customer's is presented in language as literal and exact.

"But that is only a transition stage in what was till just now a land of pioneers preoccupied by varied, boundless, and pressing practical affairs, and constrained, in consequence, to be resourceful, versatile, quick, rather than reflective and profound. This is changing; we lose the virtues and the defects of the old-style American; we become less self-reliant, individualistic and also less superficial. This last modification is affecting our literature and will probably continue to do so with increasing rapidity for the reason that whenever men and women learn to read with gusto and imagination they do not go back to reading as a sedative.

"I believe that the future of writing in America is dependent upon this change in which I am so confident. Without it we cannot expect to encourage the writer who knows the truth:—that the value of creative work lies not in what the creator himself contributes but in the contribution which he evokes from those who read his words, see his pictures, and hear his music."

—James Boyd.

THE TRAIN RIDE[1]

All morning the cars rattled and lurched through cypress swamps amid which, at lonely intervals, rough cabins, stuck up crazily on stilts in gray fields of tobacco stalks, looked like wretched, unseaworthy arks left stranded by catastrophe. High-sounding stations, Climax, Eureka, Social City, Emporium, turned out successively to be no more than shanties, with at most a doggery and grog shop in addition, where grey and listless men watched the train's long stop imperturbably. Then in a fury of bell ringing and throaty whistles the engine would start again, and if the road was pretty straight, their speed would mount to five, to ten, to fifteen miles an hour, till the rattling windows tried to jump out of their frames and the kerosene-lamps overhead kicked up against the ceiling. To James Fraser, clutching the edges of the red plush seat, these moments of high velocity were dangerously intoxicating. He felt that to a man who thus, enveloped in smoke and an unsupportable, maddening din, annihilated space, all things were possible. He felt that if he had a mind, he could dive right out the window and, freed from earthly trammels, soar away to join the startled turkey buzzards. Not seriously, of course, but just enough to give him a sense of vast emancipation.

Remembering Bill's solicitous advice, he had taken a seat at the end of the car farthest from the stove. There was small temptation to do otherwise, for the day was hot and bright, despite which, however, the stove was kept well stocked with pine knots, possibly for the purpose of vaporizing the tobacco juice that by the better class of travellers was invariably directed against its glowing sides. There were other travellers less con-

[1] From *Marching On* by James Boyd. Reprinted by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

siderate. It, therefore, gave satisfaction to James, who had fortified himself with a small chew of Bully Boy, to walk down the aisle from time to time and deposit the surplus where it would rebound to the credit of his bringing up. On these visits to the stove he was able to make covert inspection of his fellow passengers, to note the hard-voiced Yankee merchant, who looked so staid and sober among the gold seals and flowered plush waistcoats of the up-country planters and the splendors of the handsome matron who, with an entourage consisting of a lace-swaddled baby, a little boy in a velvet roundabout, two negro maids, and countless portmanteaus and hat-boxes, had preëmpted the better half of the car. She sat unmoved, her green mantua drawn close about her, amid her party's unrelieved confusion. The baby cried, a portmanteau burst open, the negresses ate lumps of pork fat and licked their chops, the little boy leaned out the window, and was hauled back with a cinder in his eye and a face as black as a Christy minstrel. It was all the same to the handsome matron. Across from her an ancient lady, a mere withered heap of ostrich plumes and jet, sat very rigid, vibrating every bead in indignation at the aromatic snores of a gentleman in a sky-blue neck-cloth obviously the worse for too many convivial precautions against the journey. Her mounting sense of outrage took concrete form when Captain Joe, the conductor, stoop-shouldered, deprecating, gently officious, requested her fare. In a vibrant voice she denied the obligation to pay for transportation under circumstances so abhorrent to a lady. With all possible deference, and a bow cut short by a lurch of the car, Captain Joe, while expressing the highest esteem for Miss Miranda's private character and social position, begged to be excused from sharing her view. Brushing aside his formal compliments she proposed, for the benefit of the now attentive car, a series of rhetorical questions which ended with the demand if he thought she was going to pay good money to be cooped up alongside of a drunken, snorting pine-rooter. She paused dramatically while every ostrich plume quivered a mute accusation at the unconscious gentleman

in the blue neck-cloth. Captain Joe took off his hat and gazed at the large brass plate inscribed "Conductor" on the front of it as though he would draw reassurance from this tangible evidence of his official status. But the old lady turned her back on him. He put his cap on again dejectedly and came down the aisle.

"Miss Miranda is a mighty fine lady," he observed to two old planters in front of James, "but she always was set in her notions. I declare I don't know what to say to her," he added superfluously enough.

The planters nodded. One stroked the long gray hair on his neck.

"They ain't a thing a man can say when a lady gets set that way."

The other, somewhat younger and sharper featured, cocked his head judicially.

"It appears to me like she ought to pay her fare." He looked up at the conductor as though he had contributed the most helpful suggestion in the world.

"Yes. That's so," Captain Joe admitted. "Everybody ought." He seemed to feel that thus to state the principle in general terms somewhat reduced its disquieting application.

The younger old planter sharpened his features, he frowned.

"But she won't pay it. That's where the trouble is." Again he seemed to feel that he had done much to solve the difficulty.

His gray-haired friend roused himself.

"Won't some of her kin pay at the other end?"

The conductor was not hopeful.

"She's fought with all her kin."

The planters were dejected.

"A person makes a mighty big mistake to fight with their kin," said the younger. The older shook his gray head.

"That's too bad."

"It sho'ly is," Captain Joe agreed, "because she's a mighty fine lady. Only," he continued, "she's got this idea about paying fare. Another time it was because the roof of the car caught fire. I let it go then but the company people of Wilmington blamed me some for it."

At this point the Yankee who had been watching the conference with interest got up and joined them.

"What's the difficulty, gents, what's the difficulty?" he rapped out with a proprietary air.

Captain Joe hesitated, seeming to sense that the new-comer might not prove sympathetic. The sharp-faced planter inclined his head toward Miss Miranda.

"That lady don't appear to be inclined to pay her fare."

The Yankee rubbed his hands together briskly.

"Won't pay? Thunderation! She's got to pay. Passenger's a party to a contract."

The conductor was offended by the Yankee's assurance.

"But how you going to do if she won't pay?"

"How? Thunderation! Put her off next stop. Just a matter of business."

Captain Joe stared at this ruthless being in astonishment.

"How you going to put her off?"

It was the Yankee's turn to stare.

"How? How? Why, my soul, like anybody else."

The planters were now aroused. They conferred together in whispers, each keeping a hostile eye on the Northern man of business. They reached down into their pockets, passed silver dollars to the conductor.

"Take out whatever it is, Captain," said the elder, "and let the lady ride."

"Of course," the Yankee cut in, "if that old party's without funds, I'd be glad to come in myself."

The younger planter gave a short, dry laugh.

"Funds! Why if that lady owns one negro, she owns fifteen."

At this the Yankee subsided into dazed silence. Meanwhile the conductor was speaking.

"I declare, I surely do appreciate this, gentlemen," he said. "It relieves me from a mighty embarrassing situation. No one cain't say I don't try to be accommodating," he ventured. The planters nodded. "Why, on this very trip I am carrying a pair of cassimere pantaloons for Judge Sellers at Halifax, and

the Judge is Miss Miranda's own second cousin. I reckon you gentlemen are acquainted with him. He's a man about my size and he got me to have the pantaloons made to my measure at Wilmington. Then I've got a possum dog for Kinney Bethune at Rocky Mount, and a spool of ribbon that my wife matched for the Jennings girls there. Their niece is fixing to marry a gentleman from Virginia in October. At Sweet Gum I've got to find old man Denahay and tell him that his son-in-law's in jail again. Yes, suh, I try to be accommodating," he repeated, "but when it comes to collecting fares I feel like the company holds me mo' or less responsible."

The Yankee here capitulated. He turned away and went back to his seat, where for some time afterward he stared out the window in a state of deep dejection.

MARGARET DELAND

Novelist, story-writer

To think of Mrs. Deland is to think of Dr. Lavendar and Old Chester. The original locality of the Old Chester tales is Alleghany, Pennsylvania, and its suburb of Manchester, where Mrs. Deland spent the early years of her life. Her life has had the quiet charm of her stories. There are tales of her delight in outdoor life when she was a girl, and of the artistic home of her married life—the home which has been notable for its hospitality and its gardens. Mrs. Deland did welfare work in France during the Great War.

"When you ask me for a *specimen* of what I consider my best writing, I am rather dismayed, for I feel so entirely dissatisfied with all my writing, that I would hesitate to commend any part of it as an illustration of composition!

"You may possibly be interested to know that there is a page in *The Awakening of Helena Richie* which at least indicates how hard I have to work to acquire lucidity and precision in what I am trying to say. I have not the novel at hand, so I cannot tell you the number of the page, but I think you would have no difficulty in finding it when I tell you that it tries to show the way in which Helena Richie's mind worked to reach the conclusion that her wrongdoing did not concern herself alone. (It follows the death of young Sam Wright.) What I wanted to do in this story was to put into unphilosophical words the conviction of an entirely simple and untrained mind, which Kant (in the

Categorical Imperative) sums up as the basis of morality. In other words, I wanted to make an unphilosophical person reach a conclusion—the conclusion being that "no one of us can do that which, if done by all, would destroy society." It took me about three months to write this one page, in which Helena makes this discovery. I don't mean that I worked every day for three months on that page, but there were not very many days when I did not go over the whole page, cutting out, compressing it, then enlarging it, and then moving the words around. When, at last, my publishers had to have my manuscript, whether I had finished it or not, I let it go, although I was very far from satisfied with it. I mention this because your pupils may have an idea that it is easy to write novels. If they will try it, they will discover that it is not!

"This reminds me of a very exquisite and perfect paragraph written by Lafcadio Hearn. He wanted to describe a dragon-fly darting about in the sunny air over a swamp. As I remember that paragraph, there are only ten lines in it; but Hearn wrote it *seventeen times before he was satisfied with it.* Now it is as perfect as a jewel—as perfect, in fact, as the flight of a dragon-fly in the sunshine!"

—Margaret Deland.

THE AWAKENING OF HELENA RICHIE[1]

"He was cleaning his father's pistol, and it went off—" the poor, dazed mother said, over and over. The father said nothing. He sat, his elbow on his knee, his forehead resting in the palm of his hand. Sometimes his heavy eyes glanced up, but he did not lift his head. He had hardly spoken since the accident. Then, he had said to William King:

"I suppose he undertook to clean my revolver. He always did things at queer times. I suppose it went off. It had a tricky hammer. It went off. By accident—not . . . He hadn't any reason to . . . He said, only yesterday, when he got back, that he couldn't stay away from home any longer. He said he *had* to come home. So, you see, there isn't any reason to think . . . He was cleaning it. And it went off. The hammer was tricky."

The slow, bewildered words were spoken with his eyes fixed blindly on the floor. At the sight of his dreadful composure, his wife's loud weeping died into a frightened whimper. He did not repeat the explanation. Dr. Lavendar heard it from Mrs. Wright, as she knelt beside the poor, stony father, patting his hand and mothering him.

"It was an accident, Dr. Lavendar. Sammy took a notion to clean his father's pistol. And it went off. And oh, he had just come back to us again. And he was so glad to get home. He went to church yesterday morning. I didn't have to urge him. He wanted to go. I feel sure he had begun to think of his Saviour. Yes; and he wanted to go back to the bank, and write up his ledgers; he was so happy to be among us again. Oh, Dr. Lavendar, he said to me, 'I just had to come home, mother, to you and father.' And I kissed him, and I said, 'Yes, my darling; home

[1] From Chapter XXIV. Reprinted by permission of Harper and Brothers.

is the best place.' And he kissed me, Dr. Lavendar. Sammy was not one to do that—a big boy, you know. Oh, I am so glad he *wanted* to come home. And now the Lord has taken him. Oh, Samuel, try, try to say: 'Blessed be the name of the Lord!' "

The senior warden stared in silence at her plump hand, shaking and trembling on his knee. Dr. Lavendar did not urge any word of resignation. He sat beside the stricken pair, hearing the mother's pitiful babble, looking at the father's bent grey head, saying what he could of Sam—his truthfulness, his good nature, his kindness. "I remember once he spent a whole afternoon making a splint for Danny's leg. And it was a good splint," said Dr. Lavendar. Alas! how little he could find to say of the young creature who was a stranger to them all!

Dr. Lavendar stayed with them until noon. He had been summoned just as he was sitting down to breakfast, and he had gone instantly, leaving Mary wringing her hands at the double distress of a dreadful calamity and Dr. Lavendar's going without his breakfast. When he saw William King he asked no questions, except:

"Who will tell his grandfather?"

But of course there was only one person to tell Mr. Benjamin Wright, and Dr. Lavendar knew it. "But you must come with me, William; Benjamin is very frail."

"Yes;" said William King; "only you've got to have something to eat first."

And that gave Dr. Lavendar the chance to ask Mrs. Wright for some breakfast, which made her stop crying, poor soul, for a little while.

As Goliath pulled them slowly up the hill, William told part of his part of the story. He had dropped in to the Wrights' the night before to say how-do-you-do. "It was nearly ten. I only stayed a few minutes; then I went off. I had got as far as the gate, and I was—was fixing my lantern, and I thought I heard a shot. And I said—'*What's that?*' And I stood there, sort of holding my breath, you know; I couldn't believe it was a

shot. And then they called. When I got to the house, it was all over. It was instantaneous. Samuel told me that Sam had been fooling with his revolver, and—"

"Yes;" said Dr. Lavendar; "that's what Eliza told me."

Both men were silent. Then Dr. Lavendar said "Will it kill Benjamin?"

"I don't know. I don't know;" the doctor said, sighing. "Oh, Dr. Lavendar, why does the Lord hit the innocent over the guilty's shoulder? The boy is out of it; but his father and mother and grandfather, and—and others, they have got to bear it."

"Why, Willy, my boy," said Dr. Lavendar, "that's where the comfort of it is. It means we're all one—don't you see? If we suffer in the boy's suffering or wrong-doing, it is because we and he are one in Christ Jesus."

"Yes, sir," said William respectfully. But he did not understand.

When they reached The Top, it seemed to take them a long time to hitch Goliath. It was Dr. Lavendar who got himself together first and said calmly, "Come, William."

The front door was open, and the two bearers of heavy news entered unannounced. Benjamin Wright was in the dining-room, where the shutters were bowed to keep out the heat. He had taken off his hat, and was pottering about among his canaries, scolding Simmons and swearing at the weather. Dr. Lavendar and William, coming from the white glare of sunshine, could hardly distinguish him as he shuffled back and forth among the shadows, except when he crossed the strip of dazzling green light between the bowed shutters. Dr. Lavendar stopped on the threshold; William stood a little behind him.

Mr. Wright was declaiming sonorously:

> "—Did you ever see the Devil,
> With his wooden leg and shovel,
> A-scratching up the gravel—"

He paused to stick a cuttlefish between the bars of a cage, and catching sight of the first figure, instantly began to snarl a reproach:

"I might have been in my grave for all you know, Edward Lavendar; except you'd have had to 'give hearty thanks for the good example' of the deceased. What a humbug the burial service is—hey? Same thing for an innocent like me, or for a senior warden. Come in. Simmons! Whiskey"—

He stopped short; William had moved in the shadows. "Why, that's Willy King," he said; and dropped the cuttlefish. "Something's wrong. Two black coats at this hour of the day mean something. Well! Out with it! What's happened?"

"Benjamin," said Dr. Lavendar, coming into the room, "Sam's Sam—"

"Keep Willy King out!" commanded the very old man in a high, peevish voice. "I'm not going to die of it. He's—killed himself? Well; it's my fault. I angered him." He took up his hat, clutching the brim with shaking hands and pulling it fiercely down over his eyes. "Keep Willy off! I'm not—I'm not—"

Simmons caught him as he lurched back into a chair, and Dr. Lavendar bent over him, his old face moving with tears.

"It was an accident, Benjamin, either of the body or the soul—it doesn't matter which."

William King, standing behind the chair that held the forlorn and quivering heap, ventured gently: "Samuel says that Sam was cleaning his pistol, and—"

But Dr. Lavendar held up his hand and William was silent.

"Hold your tongue;" said Benjamin Wright. "Lavendar knows I don't like lies. Yes; my fault. I've done it again. Second time. Second time. Simmons! Get these—gentlemen some—whiskey."

Simmons, his yellow jaws mumbling with terror, looked at Dr. Lavendar, who nodded. But even as the old man got himself together, the brain flagged; William saw the twist come across the mouth, and the eyes blink and fix.

It was not a very severe shock, and after the first moments of alarm, the doctor said quietly:

"He is not dying."

But he was, of course, perfectly helpless and silenced; his miserable eyes seemed to watch them, fixedly, as they carried him to his bed, and did what little could be done; but he could make no demand, and offer no explanation.

It was not until late in the afternoon that William King had time to go to the Stuffed Animal House. He had had a gravely absorbing day; not only because of the Wrights' pitiful demands upon his time, but because of the necessary explanations and evasions to Old Chester. To his wife evasions were impossible; he gave her an exact statement of the facts as he knew them. Martha, listening, and wiping her eyes, was shocked into fairness and sympathy.

"But, William, she was not to blame!"

"That's what I told her."

"Poor thing!" said Martha; "why, I feel as if I ought to go right up and comfort her."

"No, no; it isn't necessary," William said. "I'll go, on my way to The Top."

Mrs. King drew back, coldly, and sympathy wavered into common sense. "Well, perhaps it's just as well you should. I'm afraid I couldn't make her feel that she had no responsibility at all,—as you seem to think. That's one thing about me, I may not be perfect, but I am sincere; I think she ought to have stopped Sam's love-making months ago!—Unless perhaps she returned it?" Martha ended, in a tone that made William redden with silent anger. But he forgot his anger and everything else when he came into the long parlor at the Stuffed Animal House, late that afternoon.

"I've thought of you all day," he said, taking Helena's hand and looking pitifully into her face. It was strangely changed. Something was stamped into it that had never been there before. . . . Weeks ago, a hurricane of anger had uprooted content and vanity and left confusion behind it. But there was no confusion now; it had cleared into terror.

William found her walking restlessly up and down; she gave

him a look, and then stood quite still, shrinking a little to one side, as if she expected a blow. Something in that frightened, sidewise attitude made him hesitate to tell her of Benjamin Wright; she hardly knew the old gentleman, but it would startle her, the doctor reasoned. And yet, when very carefully, almost casually, he said that Mr. Wright had had a slight shock—"his life is not in danger just now," said William, "but he can't speak;"—she lifted her head and looked at him, drawing a full breath, as if eased of some burdening thought.

"Will he ever speak?" she said.

"I don't know; I think so. But probably it is the beginning of the end; poor old man!"

"Poor old man," she repeated mechanically; "poor old man!"

"I haven't told Dr. Lavendar about—last night," William said; "but if you have no objection I would like to just hint at—at a reason. He would know how entirely blameless you were."

"Oh, no! please, please, don't!" she said. And William King winced at his own clumsiness; her reticence made him feel as if he had been guilty of an impropriety, almost of an indelicacy.

After a pause he said gently, that he hoped she would sit with Mrs. King and himself at the funeral on Wednesday.

Helena caught her hands together convulsively; "*I* go? Oh, no, no! I am not going."

The doctor was greatly distressed. "I know it is hard for you, but I'm afraid Samuel and his wife will be so hurt if you don't come. They know the boy was fond of you—you were always so good to him. I don't like to urge you, because I know it pains you; but—"

"Oh, I can't—I can't!"

She turned so white that William had not the heart to say anything more. But that same kind heart ached so for the father and mother, that he was grateful to her when he saw her on Wednesday, among the people gathering at the church. "Just like her unselfishness!" he said to himself.

All Old Chester, saddened and awed, came to show its sym-

pathy for the stricken parents, and its pity, if nothing more, for the dead boy. But Helena, ghastly pale, had no room in her mind for either pity or sympathy. She heard Mr. Dilworth's subdued voice directing her to a pew, and a few minutes afterwards found herself sitting between Dr. and Mrs. King. Martha greeted her with an appropriate sigh: but Mrs. Richie did not notice her. There was no sound in the waiting church, except once in a while a long-drawn breath, or the faint rustle of turning leaves as some one looked for the burial service. The windows, with their little borders of stained glass, were tilted half-way open this hot morning, and sometimes the silence was stirred by the brush of sparrows in the ivy under the sills. On the worn carpet in the chancel the sunshine lay in patches of red and blue and purple, that flickered noiselessly when the wind moved the maple leaves outside; it was all so quiet that Helena could hear her own half-sobbing breaths. After a while, the first low note of the organ crept into the stillness, and as it deepened into a throbbing chord, there was the grave rustle of a rising congregation. Then from the church door came the sudden shock of words:

"*I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord.*"

Helena, clutching at the back of the next pew, stood up with the rest. Suddenly she swayed, as though the earth was moving under her feet . . . The step of the bearers came heavily up the aisle. Her eyes fled from what they carried—("oh, was he so tall?")—and then shuddered back again to stare.

Martha King touched her arm; "We sit down now."

Helena sat down. Far outside her consciousness words were being said: "Now is Christ risen—" but she did not hear them; she did not see the people about her. She only saw, before the chancel, that long black shape. After a while the doctor's wife touched her again; "Here we stand up." Mechanically, she rose; her lips were moving in a terrified whisper, and Martha King, glancing at her sidewise, looked respectfully away. "Praying," the good woman thought; and softened a little.

But Helena was far from prayer. As she stared at the black thing before the chancel, her selfishness uncovered itself before her eyes and showed its nakedness.

The solid ground of experience was heaving and staggering under her feet, and in the midst of the elemental tumult, she had her first dim glimpse of responsibility. It was a blasting glimpse, that sent her cowering back to assertions of her right to her own happiness. Thirteen years ago Lloyd had made those assertions, and she had accepted them and built them into a shelter against the assailing consciousness that she was an outlaw, pillaging respect and honor from her community. Until now nothing had ever shaken that shelter. Nor had its dark walls been pierced by the disturbing light of any heavenly vision declaring that when personal happiness conflicts with any great human ideal, the right to claim such happiness is as nothing compared to the privilege of resigning it. She had not liked the secrecy which her shelter involved; no refined temperament likes secrecy. But the breaking of the law, in itself, had given her no particular concern; behind her excusing platitudes she had always been comfortable enough. Even that whirlwind of anger at Benjamin Wright's contempt had only roused her to buttress her shelter with declarations that she was not harming anybody. But sitting there between William King and his wife, in the midst of decorously mournful Old Chester, she knew she could never say that any more; not only because a foolish and ill-balanced youth had been unable to survive a shattered ideal, but because she began suddenly and with consternation to understand that the whole vast fabric of society rested on that same ideal. And she had been secretly undermining it! Her breath caught, strangling, in her throat. In the crack of the pistol and the crash of ruined family life she heard for the first time the dreadful sound of the argument of her life to other lives; and at that sound the very foundation of those excuses of her right to happiness, rocked and crumbled and left her selfishness naked before her eyes.

It was so unbearable, that instantly she sought another shelter: obedience to the letter of the Law—Marriage. To marry her

fellow outlaw seemed to promise both shelter and stability—for in her confusion she mistook marriage for morality. At once! Never mind if he was tired of her; never mind if she must humble what she called her pride, and plead with him to keep his word; never mind anything—except this dreadful revelation: that no one of us may do that which, if done by all, would destroy society. Yes; because she had not understood that, a boy had taken his own life. . . . Marriage! That was all she thought of; then, suddenly, she cowered—the feet of the bearers again.

"I will be married," she said with dry lips, "oh, I will—I *will!*" And Martha King, looking at her furtively, thought she prayed.

It was not a prayer, it was only a promise. For with the organic upheaval into her soul of the primal fact of social responsibility, had come the knowledge of guilt.

But the Lord was not in the earthquake.

GERTRUDE ATHERTON

Novelist

Mrs. Atherton's best work, and indeed her favorite work, is her historical novels, although she has been accused, as in the case of Alexander Hamilton in *The Conqueror*, of idealizing her hero. However that may be, the student may get a vivid idea of the early days of the Republic from reading that book.

In regard to her best writing, Mrs. Atherton says:

"My choice lies between the description of a hurricane in the first part of *The Conquerer* and the geological chapter in *California—An Intimate History*."

GERTRUDE ATHERTON.

"You shall have all you wish,and now I must return to the city. Can you walk?"

"Send a litter for me,Pericles.Tell your slaves you found me exhausted after too long a walk for my years---and to hold their tongues. Also,send bread and wine."

"You are an old fool,Nous,to reduce yourself to such a plight; but Athens cannot spare you,nor can I. ~~You shall have all that you wish.~~"

He lifted him unceremoniously and propped him against a tree."Now fix your thoughts on that cidaada and try to discover ~~why~~ how such a small creature can make such a racket. And don't go to sleep."

The philosopher's eyes twinkled." It is the thought of bread and wine that will keep me awake. Hasten,dear Pericles!"

~~Hippodamus and Zosme had gone to Thurii and Herodotus had come to Athens to enlist the Muses in the cause of Thurii.~~ The Piraeus was now a beautiful white city,with ~~wide~~ streets and splendid squares,the Agora called after its proud architect. Galetea was the mother of four boys,and her husband,now wealthy himself,had built a fine house ~~of his own.~~ ~~Many wealthy~~ citizens of Athens,for the sake of the fresh sea breezes,had built ~~houses on the slopes of Munychia and Acte,~~ although they spent the greater part ~~of the day in the capital.~~

Hippodamus had gone to Italy to build Thurii and taken Zosme with him.Herodotus,fascinated by what he heard of the new city,had followed,and word came back to his disconsolate friend,Sophocles, that he would ~~dwell there and that Hippodamus was building him a new house on the street~~ and had enrolled himself a member of one of the Ten Tribes,established after the model of Athens. Cleandridas,who had been a wanderer since he had deserted the Spartan army,had also turned up in Thurii and promised to be a useful citizen.The houses had been built first,and the colonists were writing home boastfully ~~about~~ the beauty of their new city.All other colonies were flourish-

Facsimile of a page of manuscript from "An Immortal Marriage" by Gertrude Atherton.

THE CONQUEROR [1]

When he awoke, at seven o'clock, he heard a dull low roar in the southeast, which arrested his attention at once as a sound quite dissimilar from the boom of the reef. As he crossed Strand Street to Mr. Cruger's store, an hour later, he noticed that a strong wind blew from the same direction and that the atmosphere was a sickly yellow. For a moment, he thought of the hurricane which he had passed his life expecting, but he had a head full of business and soon forgot both roar and wind. He was immediately immersed in a long and precise statement of his trip, writing from notes and memory, muttering to himself, utterly oblivious to the opening of the windows or the salutations of the clerks. Mr. Cruger arrived after the late breakfast. He looked worried, but shook Alexander's hand heartily, and thanked heaven, with some fervour, that he had returned the night before. They retired to the private office on the court, and Mr. Cruger listened with interest to young Hamilton's account of his trip, although it was evident that his mind felt the strain of another matter. He said abruptly:—

"The barometer was down two-tenths when I visited the Fort at a quarter to eleven. I'd give a good deal to know where it is now."

Alexander remembered his aunt's barometer, which he had hung in his room before sailing, and volunteered to go over and look at it.

"Do," exclaimed Mr. Cruger; "and see if the wind's shifted."

As Alexander crossed Strand Street to the side door of Mr. Mitchell's house he encountered the strongest wind he had ever felt, and black clouds were racing back and forth as if

[1] Chapter IX from *The Conqueror* by Gertrude Atherton. Copyright by Frederick A. Stokes Company.

lost and distracted. He returned to tell Mr. Cruger that the barometer stood at 30.03.

"And the wind hasn't shifted?" demanded Mr. Cruger. "That means we'll be in the direct path of a hurricane before the day is half out, unless things change for the better. If the barometer falls four-tenths"—he spread out his hands expressively. "Of course we have many scares. Unless we hear two double guns from the Fort, there will be no real cause for alarm; but when you hear that, get on your horse as quick as you can and ride to warn the planters. The Lyttons and Stevens and Mitchells will do for you. I'll send out three of the other boys."

They returned to accounts. Mr. Cruger expressed his gratification repeatedly and forgot the storm, although the wind was roaring up King Street and rattling the jalousies until flap after flap hung on a broken hinge. Suddenly both sprang to their feet, books and notes tumbling to the floor. Booming through the steady roar of the wind was the quick thunder of cannon, four guns fired in rapid succession.

As Alexander darted through the store, the clerks were tumbling over one another to secure the hurricane windows; until the last minute, uneasy as they were, they had persuaded themselves that St. Croix was in but for the lashing of a hurricane's tail, and had bet St. Kitts against Monserrat as flattening in the path of the storm. The hurricane windows were of solid wood, clamped with iron. It took four men to close them against the wind.

Alexander was almost flung across Strand Street. Shingles were flying, the air was salt with spray skimmed by the wind from the surface of waves that were leaping high above the Fort, rain was beginning to fall. Mr. Mitchell's stables were in the rear of his house. Every negro had fled to the cellar. Alexander unearthed four and ordered them to close the hurricane windows. He had saddled many a horse, and he urged his into Strand Street but a few moments later. Here he had to face the wind until he could reach the corner and turn into King, and even the horse staggered and gasped as if the breath had been

driven out of him. He reared back against the wall, and Alexander was obliged to dismount and drag him up the street, panting for breath himself, although his back was to the wind and he kept his head down. The din was terrific. Cannon balls might have been rattling against the stones of every house, and to this was added a roar from the reef as were all the sounds of the Carribbean Sea gathered there. Alexander would have pulled his hat down over his ears, for the noise was maddening, but it had flown over the top of a house as he left the store. He was a quarter of an hour covering the few yards which lay between the stable and the corner, and when he reached the open funnel of King Street he was nearly swept off his feet. Fortunately the horse loved him, and terrified as it was permitted him to mount; and then it seemed to Alexander, as they flew up King Street to the open country, that they were in a fork of the wind, which tugged and twisted at his neck while it carried them on. He flattened himself to the horse, but kept his eyes open and saw other messengers, as dauntless as himself, tearing in various directions to warn the planters, many of whom had grown callous to the cry of "Wolf."

The horse fled along the magnificent avenue of royal palms which connected the east and west ends of the Island. They were bending and creaking horribly, the masses of foliage on the summits cowering away from the storm, wrapping themselves about in a curiously pitiful manner: the long blade-like leaves seemed striving each to protect the other. Through the ever-increasing roar of the storm, above the creaking of the trees, the pounding of the rain on the earth and on the young cane, Alexander heard a continuous piercing note, pitched upon one monotonous key like the rattle of a girl's castanets he had heard on St. Thomas. His brain, indifferent now to the din, was as active as ever, and he soon made out this particular noise to be the rattle of millions of seeds in the dry pods of the "shaggy-shaggy," or "giant," a common Island tree, which had not a leaf at this season, nothing but countless pods as dry as parchment and filled with seeds as large as peas. Not for a second did

this castanet accompaniment to the stupendous bass of the storm cease, and Alexander, whose imagination, like every other sense in him, was quickening preternaturally, could fancy himself surrounded by the orchestra of hell, the colossal instruments of the infernal regions performed upon by infuriate Titans. He was not conscious of fear, although he knew that his life was not worth a second's purchase, but he felt a wild exhilaration, a magnificent sense of defiance of the most powerful element that can be turned loose on this planet; his nostrils quivered with delight; his soul at certain moments, when his practical faculty was not in requisition, felt as if high in the roaring space with the Berserkers of the storm.

Suddenly his horse, in spite of the wall of wind at his back, stood on his hind legs, then swerved so fiercely that his rider was all but unseated. A palm had literally leaped from the earth, sprawled across the road not a foot in front of the horse. The terrified brute tore across the cane-field, and Alexander made no attempt to stop him, for, although the rain was now falling as if the sea had come in on the high back of the wind, he believed himself to be on the Stevens plantation. The negro village was not yet deserted, and he rode to the west side of the mill and shouted his warning to the blacks crouching there. On every estate was a great bell, hung in an open stone belfry, and never to be rung except to give warning of riot, flood, fire, or hurricane. One of the blacks obeyed Alexander's preëmptory command to ring this bell, and as it was under the lee of the mill reached it in a moment. As Alexander urged his horse out into the storm again, he heard the rapid agitated clang of the bell mingle discordantly with the bass of the wind and the piercing rattle of the giant's castanets. He rode on through the cane-field, although if the horse stumbled and injured itself, he would have to lie on his face till the storm was over. But there was a greater danger in the avenue; he was close enough to see and hear tree after tree go down, or their necks wrenched and the great green heads rush through the air with a roar of their own, their long glittering leaves extended before them as if in supplication.

The Lytton plantation was next on his way, and Alexander rode straight for the house, as the mills and village lay far to the left. The hurricane shutters on the sides encountering the storm were already closed, and he rode round to the west, where he saw his uncle's anxious face at a drawing-room window. Mr. Lytton flung himself across the sash in an attempt to lift the boy from his horse into the room, and when Alexander shouted that he was on his way to the Mitchell estate, expostulated as well as he could without breaking his throat. He begged him to rest half an hour at least, but when informed that the Fort for the first time within the memory of man had fired its double warning, he ran to fasten his hurricane windows more securely, and despatch a slave to warn his blacks; their huts never would survive the direct attack of a hurricane. He was horrified to think of his favourite exposed to a fury, which, clever and intrepid as he was, he had small chance of outwitting; but at least he had that one chance, and Mrs. Mitchell was alone.

Alexander passed through one other estate before he reached Mr. Mitchell's, terrifying those he warned almost as much by his wild and ragged appearance—his long hair drove straight before him, and his thin shirt was in sodden ribbons—as by his news that a first-class hurricane was upon them. At least he was in the cane-fields of his destination, and the horse, as if in communication with that ardent brain so close to his own, suddenly accelerated his already mercurial pace, until it seemed to Alexander that he gathered up his legs and darted like an inflated swallow straight through crashing avenues and flying huts to the stable door. Fortunately this solid building opened to the west, and Alexander was but a few moments stalling and feeding the animal who had saved two necks by his clever feet that day. He was sorry so poorly to reward him as to close and bar the door, but he feared that he might forget to attend to it when the hurricane veered, and in all the fury of approaching climax was pouring out of the west.

The house was only an eighth of a mile away, but Alexander was half an hour reaching it. He had to travel on his knees,

sometimes on his stomach, until he reached the western wall, keeping his arm pressed close against his eyes; his sense of humour, not to be extinguished by a hurricane, rebelling at the ignoble pass to which his pride had come. When he reached the north wall he rose, thinking he could cling to the projections, but he was still facing the storm; he flung himself prostrate again to avoid being lifted off his feet and sailing with the rubbish of Mr. Mitchell's plantation. As he reached the corner the wind gave him a vicious flip, which landed him almost at the foot of the steps, but he was comparatively safe, and he sat down to recover his breath. He could afford a few moments' rest, for the heavy wooden windows facing the east, north, and south, were closed. Here he was sheltered in a way. The only two good words that can be said for a hurricane are that it gives sufficient warning of its approach, and that it blows from one point of the compass at a time. Alexander sat there panting and watched the wild battle in mid-air of shingles, fences, thatched roofs, and tree-tops; listened to the artillery of the storm, which, with a stone building to break its steady roar, sounded as if a hundred cannon were bombarding the walls and rattling here and there on their carriages meanwhile; listened to crash after crash of tree and wall, the terrified howlings and bellowings of beasts, the shrieking and grinding of trees, the piercing monotone of the dry seeds in their cases of parchment, the groans and prayers of the negroes in the cellar behind him. He turned his head and looked through the windows of the great apartment, which, although above ground, was supposed to be the safest retreat in a hurricane. All but the western blinds being closed, the cellar was almost dark, but Alexander knew that it was packed; doubtless every African on the estate was there; he could see, for some distance back, row after row of rolling eyes and hanging tongues. Some knelt on the shoulders of others to get the air. Alexander shuddered. The sight reminded him of his uncle's slave-ships, where the blacks came chained together, standing in the hold so closely packed that if one died he could not fall, nor the others protect themselves from the poisons of a

corpse, which pressed hard against the living for twenty hours perhaps, before it was unchained and flung to the sharks. Alexander went close to one of the windows and shouted to them not to forget to secure the western blinds when the lull came, then ran up the steps and vaulted through an open window. It was a few minutes before he found his aunt, and it must be recorded that on his way to the front of the house he looked under two beds and into four wardrobes. He came upon her in the drawing-room, valiantly struggling with a hurricane window. Her hair was dishevelled, and her eyes bulged with horror, but even as Alexander came to the rescue, she shoved the bar into place. Then she threw herself into his arms and fainted. He had but time to fling water on her face, when a loud rattle from another window sent him bounding to it, and for ten minutes he strove to fasten the blind soundly again, while it seemed to him that a hundred malignant fingers were tugging at its edge. He had no sooner secured it, than his aunt's voice at his ear begged him to try every window on three sides of the house, and he went rapidly from one to the other, finding most of them in need of attention—long disuse had weakened both staples and hooks. His aunt trotted after him, thumping every window, and reminding him that if one went, and the wind burst in, the roof would be off and the torrents upon them before they could reach the cellar.

Fortunately for those who fought the storm, the temperature had fallen with the barometer; these two dared not relax their vigilance for a moment. Every negro had deserted to the lower region. Alexander was unable to change his wet clothes or to refresh himself with so much as a banana, but there was not a second's time to think of hunger or discomfort. More than once that sense of wild exultation in fighting a mighty element possessed him. His own weak hands and a woman's weaker against one of the Titanic hurricanes of the world's history, with a prospect of winning the fight, was a sight to move comfortable gods to pæan or laughter, according to the mood that was in them.

But during much of that terrible day and night Alexander's

brain was obliged to work on device after device to strengthen those battered boards which alone protected the house from destruction, its inmates, perhaps, from death. A tamarind tree came down on a corner of the roof with a crash; and when Mrs. Mitchell and Alexander reached the room, which was in a wing, the rain was struggling past the heavy mass through a hole in the roof. They closed up the room, as well as the jalousies of the inner walls, but as they returned to the windows they heard the rain fighting to pass the branches, and knew that if the wind snatched the tree, the deluge would come in.

Mrs. Mitchell neither fainted again nor exhibited other sign of fear. While that hurricane lasted she was all Mary Fawcett; and Alexander, meeting her eyes now and again, or catching sight of her as she darted forward at the first rattle of a shutter, recalled his mother's many anecdotes of his redoubtable grandmother, and wondered if that valiant old soul had flown down the storm to the relief of the fortress.

Toward evening that sudden lull came which meant that at last the besieged were in the very centre of the hurricane, and would have respite while the monster was swinging his tail to the west. Alexander and Mrs. Mitchell, after opening the windows on the east side of the house, and securing those opening to the west, went to the pantry and made a substantial meal without sitting or selecting. To his last day Alexander could not remember what he ate that night, although he recalled the candle in the long glass chimney, the constant craning of his aunt's head, the incessant racing of the rats along the beams. He went to his room and took a cold bath, which with the food and suspended excitement quite refreshed him; put on dry clothes, nailed a board against the hole in the roof, then sat down with Mrs. Mitchell in the western gallery to await the hurricane's return.

"We have three windows where we had one before," remarked Mrs. Mitchell; "and the hinges of that door are rusty. God knows! If you had not come, the roof would have gone before this."

"The silence is horrible," said Alexander.

It was, indeed, earsplitting. Not a sound arose from that devastated land. Birds and beasts must lie dead by the thousand; not a horseman ventured abroad; not a whisper came from the cellar, where two hundred Africans might be dead from fright or suffocation. Mrs. Mitchell had lit the candles, and there was something sinister and ironical in the steady flames. How long before they would leap and add the final horror to what must be a night of horrors? It was impossible to work in the dark, but every yellow point was a menace.

They had not long to endure the silence. This time the hurricane sent no criers before it. It burst out of the west with a fury so intensified that Alexander wondered if one stone in Frederikstadt were left upon another. It was evident that it had gathered its forces for a final assault, and its crashing and roaring, as it tore across the unhappy Island it had marked for destruction, was that of a gigantic wheel whirling ten thousand cannon, exploding and lashing each other in mid-air. It seemed to Alexander that every ball they surely carried rattled on the roof, and the heavy stone structure vibrated for the first time. It was two hours before he and Mrs. Mitchell met again, for they worked at opposite ends of the long gallery; but in the third both rushed simultaneously to the door. It sprang back from its rusty fastenings, and they were but in time to seize the bar which passed through a staple in its middle, and pull it inward until it pressed hard against the jamb on the right. There was no other way to secure it, and for three hours Alexander and Mrs. Mitchell dragged at it alternately, while the other attended to the windows. By this time Alexander had ceased to wonder if he should see another morning, or much to care: the storm was so magnificent in its almighty power, its lungs of iron bellowed its purpose with such furious iteration, as if out of all patience with the mortals who defied it, that Alexander was almost inclined to apologize. More than once it took the house by the shoulders and shook it, and then a yell would come from below, a simultaneous note pitched in a key of common agony. Suddenly the house seemed to spring from its foundations, then

sink back as if to collapse. Alexander called out that it had been uprooted and would go down the hill in another moment, but Mrs. Mitchell, who was at the bar, muttered, "An earthquake. I believe a hurricane shakes the very centre of the earth."

They feared that the foundations of the house had been detached, and that the next blast would turn it over, but the house was one of the strongest in the Caribbees, built to withstand the worst that Nature could do, so long as man saw to its needs; and when the hurricane at last revolved its artillery away into the east, carrying with it that piercing rattle of the giant's castanets, which never for a moment had ceased to perform its part, roof and walls were intact. Mrs. Mitchell and Alexander sank where they had stood, and slept for twenty hours.

LOUIS BROMFIELD

Novelist

In 1924, at the age of twenty-eight, Mr. Bromfield published his first novel, *The Green Bay Tree*. By 1927, he had completed and published a series of four novels, including his first, which form a study of American life. Of these, *Early Autumn* received the Pulitzer Prize in 1927. Although Mr. Bromfield has produced his books at the rate of one a year, they are scanty neither in subject matter nor expression; nor do they give one at any time the impression of hasty writing. On the contrary, he appears never to be in a hurry.

The sketch of Grandpa Tolliver may be studied not only for its own sake, but for a study of the way in which Mr. Bromfield begins his novel *Possession*.

He writes:

"As far back as I can remember I always had a desire to write,—novels and plays—and I know how interested I was (and still am) in the work of writers better and more successful in one way or another than myself. I also know that a little first hand information is the greatest boon to students as well as teachers, and if anything I have to say out of my own experience is of any value or use, I am only too eager to deliver it.

"I write you in all modesty as I cannot think of myself at all in the same class with many older men and women who have done so much more. I have had the good fortune to have some degree of success while I am still young, which is, I suppose, what all writers would like.

LOUIS BROMFIELD

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my characters and their story which interests me most and it cannot bear to have it obscured by a style which attracts attention to itself. It has been said that the best style is no style at all, and in the case of the writer who has definite meaning of ideas to convey, I think this holds true inevitably for all time. There is no excuse for obscurity unless it is to conceal emptiness.

I am also a classicist and believe that no young writer loses by having those books which are accepted as classics in his own or any other language. And he may learn a good deal. He may learn also from reading the most extreme of contemporary writers and he owes it to himself to know what changes and what growths are taking place, for any national literature, but especially Anglo Saxon literature, is advanced by a slow progress and growth by which new ideas and new ways of doing things which seem startling at the moment of their appearance soon conventional and become absorbed in the main current with the passage of time.

Read and write and learn are, I think, the simplest and best instructions to any aspiring writer. He may imitate in the beginning but presently he comes to stand on his own feet and then he is born (for the first time) as a writer. Any one born to Elephant

Facsimile of part of the letter from Louis Bromfield to the author printed on the accompanying pages.

Frequently I have letters from young men and women who want to know how to become writers. To that I think there is no direct and all-enveloping answer. I do think that the most important element is the *desire* to write. If it is intense enough, the writing and the success, whether commercial or not, is certain to follow. The desire certainly includes a willingness to work without which no good writing has ever been produced. No one writes easily and glibly and when a writer ceases to learn and to discover more and better ways of saying what he wants to say, he has, I think, begun to slip back, for there is no standing still. And I suppose that to one who has a passion and desire for writing, the process is never really what is called work.

"To be sure it is not always the same sort of writing which one desires to do. One writer's interest lies perhaps in the satisfaction, like that of Pater's, in putting beautiful words in the proper and beautiful relations to each other. Another's lies in the telling of a story, pure, simple, and uncomplicated; and that of a third may lie in the exploration of a new technique. For myself, the greatest interest is always in character and in the relationships of people to each other. As to style, I am interested first of all in being clear—that is, in being able to say and to convey to the reader exactly what I mean without causing the reader to wrestle with each sentence in order to get at its meaning. And after that I am interested in writing in a fashion that is smooth and simple and rhythmical. All this is possibly because it is my characters and their story which interest me most and I cannot bear to have them obscured by a style which attracts attention to itself. It has been said that the best style is no style at all, and in the case of the writer who has definite meaning of ideas to convey I think

this holds true for all time. There is no excuse for obscurity unless it is to conceal emptiness.

"I am also a classicist and I believe that no young writer loses by knowing those works that are accepted as classics in his own or any other language. And he may learn a great deal. He may learn also from reading the most interesting of contemporary writers and he owes it to himself to know what changes and what growths are taking place; for any national literature, but especially Anglo-Saxon literature, advances by a slow progress and growth by which new ideas and new ways of doing things which seem startling at the moment of their appearance turn conventional and become absorbed in the main current with the passage of time.

"Read and write and learn are, I think, the simplest and best instruction to any aspiring writer. He may imitate in the beginning but presently he comes to stand on his own feet and then he is born as a writer. Any one born to English is, I think, singularly fortunate, for it is the richest and most flexible and in many ways the most beautiful possible instrument. Conrad chose to write in English at an heroic cost of labour.

"You asked, I think, for some examples of what seems to me good writing. I can think of several at the moment:

"(1) Thackeray, George Eliot, Trollope, Fielding, for breadth of conception and a sense of life as a whole. All of them, but especially Trollope and Thackeray, have that sense of the spectacle of life which has always marked the novel of the Great Tradition. In French it is rare, although one finds it in Anatole France, in Marcel Proust, in Balzac, and even in the extravagances of Victor Hugo. The Russians have it mingled with a mysticism and a romanticism curiously their own. Dostoievsky has it tremendously and

no novel in the world possesses so colossal a sense of the spectacle as *War and Peace*.

"(2) There are moderns too who ought not to be neglected. Virginia Woolf (notably in *Mrs. Dalloway*) for the beautiful, intellectual clarity of thought and expression. E. M. Forster for the deftness with which he makes English as witty an instrument as French. Galsworthy for the simple clarity of his writing. Conrad for the kind of thunderous beauty of romantic image and expression. Dreiser for his passionate and realistic interest in the bare and unadorned facts and details of existence and human relationship. Arnold Bennett for his homely humanitarianism and for his miraculous gift of making the commonplace seem exciting. James Joyce for the experiments he has made in pushing out the limits of written English. And many others.

"One can learn much by studying the methods of established writers, and such a study is of great value in establishing a standard and in crystallizing a sense of taste, for no writer can succeed who has no standard and does not know what it is he is striving to achieve."

—Louis Bromfield.

POSSESSION[1]

In the fading October twilight Grandpa Tolliver sat eating an apple and reading *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.* The ponderous book (Volume III) lay spread open upon his bony knees, for it was too heavy to be supported in any other way, and he read by leaning far over and peering at the pages through steel-rimmed spectacles which were not quite clear, as they never were. The dimness of lens, however, did not appear to annoy him; undisturbed he read on as if the spectacles sharpened his vision instead of dimming it. Things were, after all, what you believed them to be; therefore the spectacles served their purpose. He was not one to be bothered by such small things. . . .

The room in which he sat was square and not too large. On two sides there were windows and in one corner an enormous and funereal bed of black walnut (the nuptial bed of three generations in the Tolliver family) which bore at the moment the imprint of the perverse and angular old body. He had lain there to think. Sometimes he lay thus for hours at a time in a sort of coma, ruminating the extraordinary and imbecile diversity of life. But it was the number of books which contributed the dominating characteristic of the room. There was row upon row of them rising from floor to ceiling, rows added year by year out of Grandpa's infinitesimal income until at last they had walled him in. There were books bound in fine leather and books in cheap leather, worn and frayed at the corners, books in cheap boards and an immense number of books bound in yellow paper. Pressed close against the books on the north wall of the room there stood an enormous desk of the same funereal

[1] From *Possession*, by Louis Bromfield. Copyright by Frederick A. Stokes Company.

black walnut—a desk filled with innumerable pigeonholes into which had been stuffed without order or sequence bits of paper scribbled over with a handwriting that was fine and erratic like the tracks of a tiny bird strayed into an inkpot. The papers ranged through every variety of shade from the yellowish bisque of ancient documents to the gray white of comparatively new ones. Of all the room it was the desk alone that had an appearance of untidiness; it lay under a pall of dust save for two small spots rubbed clean by the sharp elbows of Grandpa Tolliver.

What did he write? What was contained in this immense collection of documents? No one knew that; not even the curiosity of his daughter-in-law Hattie, who entered the room each morning to throw open the windows (an action he detested) and force the old man out into the chill air of the streets, had been able to penetrate the mysteries of the extraordinary bird tracks. A word with luck, here or there. . . . Nothing more. And she had examined them often enough in a fierce effort to penetrate the secret of his strength. From years of breathless, headlong writing the words had lost all resemblance to combinations of letters. The letters themselves were obscured; they flowed into one another until each one, in the fashion of the Chinese, had become a symbol, a mystery to which the old man alone held the key. It was the writing of a man whose pen had never been able to keep pace with the lightning speed of his thoughts. It may have been that the old man himself could not have deciphered the writing on those sheets which long since had turned to a yellow bisque. So far as any one could discover, he never took them from the pigeonholes and read them a second time. They were simply thrust away to turn yellow and gather dust, for Grandpa Tolliver had suffered for years from a sense of the immense futility of everything.

As he sat in the fading light in his decrepit rocking chair the appearance of the old man struck faintly a note of the sinister. Something in the shape of his great, bony head, in the appearance of his unkempt gray beard, in the remarkable angularity

of his lean body gave him the appearance of one in alliance with the powers of darkness. The peculiar gray-green of his glittering eyes had a way of piercing through pretense, through barriers of reserve and secrecy. They were the eyes of one who knew far too much. They were the eyes that got somehow at the core of things, so that a person—even his bitterest enemy, the vigorous and unsubtle Hattie—winced before the shattering light that gathered in their depths. They looked out from under shaggy brows with a knowledge bred of solitude that was something more than human. And he had a terrible way of using them, of watching people, of silently and powerfully prying open their shells. For Grandpa Tolliver there were no longer any illusions; he was therefore a horrid and intolerable old man.

At length when the light grew too dim even for the unearthly eyes of the old man, he closed *The Decline and Fall* and devoted himself to finishing his apple, absorbed for the time being in reflecting triumphantly upon passages in the ponderous work which proved without any doubt that the human race lay beyond the possibility of improvement.

When his strong pointed teeth had finished with the apple, he cast it aside for Hattie to sweep out in the morning and, lifting *The Decline and Fall* as high as possible, he dropped it to the floor with a resounding crash. As the echo died there rose from belowstairs the sound of clattering pans shaken by the crash from the startled hands of Hattie, and then an inarticulate rumble of exasperation at this latest bit of minute deviltry.

The old man leaned back in his chair and chuckled, wickedly. It was one more skirmish in the state of war which had existed between him and his daughter-in-law over a period of years.

Through the closed window the homely sounds of a dozen backyards filtered into the room . . . the sharp slam of a refrigerator door, the sudden mad barking of a dog playing with a child, the faint whicker of a horse in one of the stables and then the sound of Hattie's vigorous voice, still carrying a persistent, unmistakable note of irritation, summoning her small sons from the far reaches of the neighborhood.

The sound of the voice rose and hung in the autumn night, rich, full-blooded, vigorous, redolent of energy, beautiful in its primitive strength. At the faint note of irritation Grandpa Tolliver, rubbing his teeth with a skinny finger, chuckled again.

The voice wavered, penetrating the remote distances of the back yards, and presently there came an answering cry in the shrill, high treble of a boy of twelve arrested suddenly in the midst of his play.

"Yay-*us!* Yay-*us!* We're coming!"

Primitive it was, like a ewe calling to her lambs, or more perhaps (thought the old man) like a lioness summoning her cubs. It was Robert who answered, the younger of the two. It was difficult for Fergus to yell in the same lusty fashion; his voice had reached the stage where it trembled perilously between a treble and a bass. The sounds he made shamed him. Fergus, like his father, disliked making a spectacle of himself. (Too sensitive, thought Grandpa Tolliver. Like his father he would be a failure in life, because he had no indifference.)

The room grew darker and after a time the sweet, acrid odor of smoldering leaves, stirred into flame by the children who played beneath the window, drifted through the cracks in the glass. As if the scent, the soft twilight, the sound of Hattie's voice, had set fire to a train of memories, Grandpa Tolliver began to rock gently. The chair made a faint squeaking sound which filled the room as if it had been invaded by a flock of bats which, circling wildly above the old man's head, uttered a chorus of faint shrill cries. . . . The old man chuckled again. It was a bitter, unearthly sound. . . .

The room in which Grandpa Tolliver sat had been added to the Tolliver house during one of those rare intervals, years ago, when his son had prospered for a time. The house itself stood back from the street in the older part of a town which within a generation had changed from a frontier settlement into a bustling city whose prosperity centered about the black mills and the flaming furnaces of a marshy district known as The Flats, a district black and unsightly and inhabited by hordes of Italians,

Poles, Slovaks and Russians who never emerged from its sooty environs into the clear air of the Hill where the old citizens had their homes. Among these houses the Tollivers' was marked by the need of paint, though this shameful fault was concealed somewhat by masses of vines—roses, honeysuckle, ivy—which overran all the dwelling and in summer threw a cloud of beauty over the horrid, imaginative trimmings conceived by some side-whiskered small town architect of the eighties. There was in the appearance of the house nothing of opulence. It was gray, commonplace and ornamented with extravagant jigsaw decorations. Also it suffered from a slate roof of a depressing shade of blue gray. But it was roomy and comfortable.

Houses occupied for a long period by the same family have a way of taking on imperceptibly but surely the characteristics of their owners. The Tollivers, Hattie and Charles, had come into the house as bride and bridegroom, in the days when Charles Tolliver had before him a bright future, years before he gave up, at the urging of his powerful wife, a commonplace adequate salary for a more reckless and extravagant career in the politics of the growing country. By now, twenty years after, the house, the lawn and the garden expressed the essence of the Tolliver family. The grass sometimes went in grave need of cutting. The paint had peeled here and there where it lay exposed to the middle-western winter. At the eaves there were streaks of black made by soot which drifted from the roaring Mills in the distant Flats. The shrubs were unpruned and the climbing roses would have been improved by a little cutting; yet these things, taken all in all, produced an effect of charm far greater than any to be found in the other neat, painted, monotonous houses that stood in unspectacular rows on either side of Sycamore Street. In the careless growth of the shrubs and vines there was a certain wildness and inspiring vigor, something full-blooded and lush which elsewhere in the block was absent. There was nothing ordered, pruned or clipped into a state of patterned mediocrity. Here, within the hedge that enclosed the Tolliver property there reigned a marked abandon,

a sense of life lived recklessly with a shameless disregard for smug security. The Tollivers clearly had no time for those things which lay outside the main current.

Yet there was no rubbish in evidence. The whole was spotlessly clean from the linden trees which stood by the curb to the magenta-colored stable at the end of the garden. You might have walked the length of the block without consciousness of the other houses; but in front of the Tollivers' you would have halted, thinking, "Here is a difference indeed. Some careless householder without proper pride in his grounds!"

Yet you would have stopped to notice it. At least it would have interested you by the wild, vigorous, disheveled character of its difference.

In the beginning the room which Gramp occupied had been built for a servant and through its doors, in the spasmodic periods of Tolliver prosperity, had passed a procession of weird and striking "hired girls" . . . country maidens come to town in search of excitement, Bohemian and Russian girls, the offspring of the Flat-dwellers; one or two who had been, to Hattie's shocked amazement, simply daughters of joy. With the passing of Myrtle, the last of these, who was retired in order to bear a child of uncertain paternity, the Tollivers' ship of fortune had slipped into one of the periodical doldrums and the stormy, unsatisfactory era of the hired girl came to an end forever. Almost as if he had divined the event, Grandpa Tolliver appeared on the same day seated beside the driver on a wagon laden with books, to announce that he had come to take up his abode with the family of his son. There was nothing to be done. The books were moved into the room above the kitchen and there the old man settled himself. He had been there now for ten years, a gadfly to torment the virtuous, bustling existence of his daughter-in-law. He seldom stirred from his room. He had, indeed, done nothing in all his life which might be scored under the name of accomplishment. As a young man he had been trained for the church, but when his education had been completed, he discovered that he had learned too much and so

believed nothing. He bothered no one. His crime was inertia. He possessed an indifference of colossal proportions.

As the room fell into a thick blackness, the rocking chair, under the urge of flooding memories, acquired a greater animation. It may have been that there was something in the homely sounds of the backyard vista and the pleasant smell of burning leaves that pierced by way of his senses the wall of the old man's impregnable solitude. Presently he chuckled again in a triumphant fashion, as if the memory of Hattie Tolliver's irritation still rang in his ears.

Ah, how she hated him! How they all scorned him! Even on his rare and solitary ramblings along the sidewalks of the Town, prosperous citizens regarded him with hostile looks. "Old Man Tolliver . . . The Failure!" They pointed him out to their children as the awful example of a man without ambition, a man who drifted into a lonely and desolate old age, abhorred and unwanted, a burden to his own children and grandchildren. That's what came of not having energy and push!

Old Man Tolliver . . . The Failure! At the thought, the wicked old man chortled more loudly than ever. Failure! Failure! What did they know of whether he was a failure or not. Failure! That was where he had the joke on the lot of them. He alone had fixed his ambition, captured his ideal; he had done always exactly what he wanted to do.

In sudden satisfaction over his secret triumph the old man was very nearly overcome by his own chuckling.

Old? Yes, he felt very old to-night. Perhaps he hadn't many years before him. May be it was only a matter of months Then he would die. What was it like to die? Just a passing out probably, into something vast and dark. Oblivion! That was it. Why wasn't that the ideal end? Oblivion, where you were nothing and had no mind and no memory and no books, where you simply did not exist. Just nothingness and eternal peace. Aratu, that kingdom where reigned mere oblivion. He wasn't looking forward to Heaven and harps. (Imagine Hattie strumming a harp!) He was filled with a sense of great completeness,

of having done everything there was to do, of having known all of life that it was possible for one man to know. Sin? What was sin? He didn't regret anything he had done. He had no remorse, no regrets. On the contrary he was glad of all the things he had done which people called sin. It gave him a satisfactory feeling of completeness. Now when he was so old, he needn't wish he had done this or done that. He had. To be sure, he hadn't murdered any one! He hadn't been guilty of theft. It was very satisfactory . . . that feeling of completeness.

Nothing remained. Death . . . Deadness . . . Why he was dead already. Death must be like this room, blank, dark, negative, neither one thing nor the other. He had been dead for weeks, for months, for years; and here he was walled up in a tomb of books. *La Pucelle* (a rare edition). What would become of it? Like as not Hattie would burn it, never knowing its value. Think how she would suffer if ever she discovered she had burned up a great pile of banknotes! *Candide*, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Spinoza, Montaigne, Darwin, Huxley. (What a row they'd caused! How well he remembered the chatter.) Plato. And there was Verlaine and George Sand and all of Thackeray. Colonel Newcome and Rebecca Sharp with her pointed nose and green eyes. What an amusing creature she was! Amelia Sedley, that tiresome, uninteresting, virtuous bore! And Charles Honeyman. (Ah! He knew things they didn't dream of in this town!) And there in the corner by the old desk, Emma Bovary tearing voluptuously at her bodice.

But they were not all ghosts of books. There were ghosts too of reality, ghosts born of memories, which came dimly out of the past, out of a youth that, dried now at its source, had been hot-blooded and romantic and restless; such ghosts as one called Celeste (in a poke bonnet with a camelia pinned just above the brim) who seemed forever peeping round the corner of a staircase as she had once peeped, in a glowing reality round the corner of a staircase in the Rue de Clichy. Nina who was more alive now than she had ever been. . . . And they thought him a failure!

Yes, they were amusing ghosts. He had lived with them so many years. Lonely? How was it possible to be lonely among such fascinating companions? He had lived with them too long. He knew them too well, inside and out. They kept him company in this tomb of books. He seldom left it. Once a week, perhaps, to walk around the block; and then the children ran from him as if they saw the Devil himself.

Grandpa Tolliver began to rock more gently now. Yes, he'd been wicked enough. He'd known everything there was to know and didn't regret it. They shut him up in this room and didn't address him for days at a time, but he had Emma Bovary and Becky Sharp to amuse him; and Celeste who belonged to him alone. Grandpa Barr didn't even have them. His children had left him—all but his daughter Hattie—to go to Iowa, to Oregon, to Wyoming, always toward the open country. Your friends might die and your children might go away, but your memories couldn't desert you, nor such friends as Emma and Becky.

Outside it began presently to rain, at first slowly with isolate, hesitating drops, and then more and more steadily until at last the whole parched earth drank up the autumn downpour.

THEODORE DREISER

Novelist, story-writer

A striking portrait of Mr. Dreiser has been written by Mr. Anderson in his *Horses and Men*, which we quote here.[1] The student may find it valuable to discover why there should be a note of sympathetic interest between these two men.

> "'Heavy, heavy, hangs over thy head,
> Fine, or superfine?'

"Theodore Dreiser is old—he is very, very old. I do not know how many years he has lived, perhaps forty, perhaps fifty, but he is very old. Something grey and bleak and hurtful, that has been in the world perhaps forever, is personified in him.

"When Dreiser is gone men shall write books, many of them, and in the books they shall write there will be so many of the qualities Dreiser lacks. The new, the younger men, shall have a sense of humor, and everyone knows Dreiser has no sense of humor. More than that, American prose writers shall have grace, lightness of touch, a dream of beauty breaking through the husks of life.

"O, those who follow him shall have many things that Dreiser does not have. That is a part of the wonder and beauty of Theodore Dreiser, the things that others shall have, because of him.

"Long ago, when he was editor of the *Delineator*, Dreiser went one day, with a woman friend, to visit an orphan asylum. The woman once told me the story of that afternoon in the big, ugly grey building, with Dreiser, looking heavy and lumpy and old, sitting on a platform, folding and refolding his pocket handkerchief and watching the children, all in their little uniforms, troop in.

[1] From *Horses and Men* by Sherwood Anderson. New York, The Viking Press. Copyright 1923 by B. W. Huebsch, Inc.

"'The tears ran down his cheeks and he shook his head,' the woman said, and that is a real picture of Theodore Dreiser. He is old in spirit and he does not know what to do with life, so he tells about it as he sees it, simply and honestly. The tears run down his cheeks and he folds and refolds the pocket handkerchief and shakes his head.

"Heavy, heavy, the feet of Theodore. How easy to pick some of his books to pieces, to laugh at him for so much of his heavy prose.

"The feet of Theodore are making a path, the heavy brutal feet. They are tramping through the wilderness of lies, making a path. Presently the path will be a street, with great arches overhead and delicately carved spires piercing the sky. Along the street will run children, shouting, 'Look at me. See what I and my fellows of the new day have done'—forgetting the heavy feet of Dreiser.

"The fellows of the ink-pots, the prose writers in America who follow Dreiser, will have much to do that he has never done. Their road is long but, because of him, those who follow will never have to face the road through the wilderness of Puritan denial, the road that Dreiser faced alone.

"'Heavy, heavy, hangs over thy head,
Fine, or superfine?'"

Mr. Dreiser writes:

"It is true that I do revise some and to some extent use actual people and incidents for my books, although my description of Clyde and his family was not taken from real life, the picture being drawn in this instance from my imagination of such a family."

—Theodore Dreiser.

AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY[1]

Dusk—of a summer night.

And the tall walls of the commercial heart of an American city of perhaps 400,000 inhabitants—such walls as in time may linger as a mere fable.

And up the broad street, now comparatively hushed, a little band of six,—a man of about fifty, short, stout, with bushy hair protruding from under a round black felt hat, a most unimportant-looking person, who carried a small portable organ such as is customarily used by street preachers and singers. And with him a woman perhaps five years his junior, taller, not so broad, but solid of frame and vigorous, very plain in face and dress, and yet not homely, leading with one hand a small boy of seven and in the other carrying a Bible and several hymn books. With these three, but walking independently behind, was a girl of fifteen, a boy of twelve and another girl of nine, all following obediently, but not too enthusiastically, in the wake of the others.

It was hot, yet with a sweet languor about it all.

Crossing at right angles the great thoroughfare on which they walked, was a second canyon-like way, threaded by throngs and vehicles and various lines of cars which clanged their bells and made such progress as they might amid swiftly moving streams of traffic. Yet the little group seemed unconscious of anything save a set purpose to make its way between the contending lines of traffic and pedestrians which flowed by them.

Having reached an intersection this side of the second principal thoroughfare—really just an alley between two tall structures—now quite bare of life of any kind, the man put down

[1] Chapter I of *An American Tragedy* by Theodore Dreiser. Published by Horace Liveright.

the organ, which the woman immediately opened, setting up a music rack upon which she placed a wide flat hymn book. Then handing the Bible to the man, she fell back in line with him, while the twelve-year-old boy put down a small camp-stool in front of the organ. The man—the father, as he chanced to be—looked about him with seeming wide-eyed assurance, and announced, without appearing to care whether he had any auditors or not:

"We will first sing a hymn of praise, so that any who may wish to acknowledge the Lord may join us. Will you oblige, Hester?"

At this the eldest girl, who until now had attempted to appear as unconscious and unaffected as possible, bestowed her rather slim and as yet undeveloped figure upon the camp chair and turned the leaves of the hymn book, pumping the organ while her mother observed:

"I should think it might be nice to sing twenty-seven to-night —'How Sweet the Balm of Jesus' Love.'"

By this time various homeward-bound individuals of diverse grades and walks of life, noticing the small group disposing itself in this fashion, hesitated for a moment to eye them askance or paused to ascertain the character of their work. This hesitancy, construed by the man apparently to constitute attention, however mobile, was seized upon by him and he began addressing them as though they were specifically here to hear him.

"Let us all sing twenty-seven, then—'How Sweet the Balm of Jesus' Love.'"

At this the young girl began to interpret the melody upon the organ, emitting a thin though correct strain, at the same time joining her rather high soprano with that of her mother, together with the rather dubious baritone of the father. The other children piped weakly along, the boy and girl having taken hymn books from the small pile stacked upon the organ. As they sang, this nondescript and indifferent street audience gazed, held by the peculiarity of such an unimportant-looking family

publicly raising its collective voice against the vast skepticism and apathy of life. Some were interested or moved sympathetically by the rather tame and inadequate figure of the girl at the organ, others by the impractical and materially inefficient texture of the father, whose weak blue eyes and rather flabby but poorly-clothed figure bespoke more of failure than anything else. Of the group the mother alone stood out as having that force and determination which, however blind or erroneous, makes for self-preservation, if not success in life. She, more than any of the others, stood up with an ignorant, yet somehow respectable air of conviction. If you had watched her, her hymn book dropped to her side, her glance directed straight before her into space, you would have said: "Well, here is one who, whatever her defects, probably does what she believes as nearly as possible." A kind of hard, fighting faith in the wisdom and mercy of that definite overruling and watchful power which she proclaimed, was written in her every feature and gesture.

"The love of Jesus saves me whole,
The love of God my steps control,"

she sang resonantly, if slightly nasally, between the towering walls of the adjacent buildings.

The boy moved restlessly from one foot to the other, keeping his eyes down, and for the most part only half singing. A tall and as yet slight figure, surmounted by an interesting head and face—white skin, dark hair—he seemed more keenly observant and decidedly more sensitive than most of the others—appeared indeed to resent and even to suffer from the position in which he found himself. Plainly pagan rather than religious, life interested him, although as yet he was not fully aware of this. All that could be truly said of him now was that there was no definite appeal in all this for him. He was too young, his mind much too responsive to phases of beauty and pleasure which had little, if anything, to do with the remote and cloudy romance which swayed the minds of his mother and father.

Indeed the home life of which this boy found himself a part of the various contacts, material and psychic, which thus far had been his, did not tend to convince him of the reality and force of all that his mother and father seemed so certainly to believe and say. Rather, they seemed more or less troubled in their lives, at least materially. His father was always reading the Bible and speaking in meeting at different places, especially in the "mission," which he and his mother conducted not so far from this corner. At the same time, as he understood it, they collected money from various interested or charitably inclined business men here and there who appeared to believe in such philanthropic work. Yet the family was always "hard up," never very well clothed, and deprived of many comforts and pleasures which seemed common enough to others. And his father and mother were constantly proclaiming the love and mercy and care of God for him and for all. Plainly there was something wrong somewhere. He could not get it all straight, but still he could not help respecting his mother, a woman whose force and earnestness, as well as her sweetness, appealed to him. Despite much mission work and family cares, she managed to be fairly cheerful, or at least sustaining, often declaring most emphatically "God will provide" or "God will show the way," especially in times of too great stress about food or clothes. Yet apparently, in spite of this, as he and all the other children could see, God did not show any very clear way, even though there was always an extreme necessity for His favorable intervention in their affairs.

To-night, walking up the great street with his sisters and brother, he wished that they need not do this any more, or at least that he need not be a part of it. Other boys did not do such things, and besides, somehow it seemed shabby and even degrading. On more than one occasion, before he had been taken on the street in this fashion, other boys had called to him and made fun of his father, because he was always publicly emphasizing his religious beliefs or convictions. Thus in one neighborhood in which they had lived, when he was but a child of seven,

his father, having always preluded every conversation with "Praise the Lord," he heard boys call "Here comes old Praise-the-Lord Griffiths." Or they would call out after him "Hey, you're the fellow whose sister plays the organ. Is there anything else she can play?"

"What does he always want to go around saying, 'Praise the Lord' for? Other people don't do it."

It was that old mass yearning for a likeness in all things that troubled them, and him. Neither his father nor his mother was like other people, because they were always making so much of religion, and now at last they were making a business of it.

On this night in this great street with its cars and crowds and tall buildings, he felt ashamed, dragged out of normal life, to be made a show and jest of. The handsome automobiles that sped by, the loitering pedestrians moving off to what interests and comforts he could only surmise; the gay pairs of young people, laughing and jesting and the "kids" staring, all troubled him with a sense of something different, better, more beautiful than his, or rather their life.

And now units of this vagrom and unstable street throng, which was forever shifting and changing about them, seemed to sense the psychologic error of all this in so far as these children were concerned, for they would nudge one another, the more sophisticated and indifferent lifting an eyebrow and smiling contemptuously, the more sympathetic or experienced commenting on the useless presence of these children.

"I see these people around here nearly every night now—two or three times a week, anyhow," this from a young clerk who had just met his girl and was escorting her toward a restaurant. "They're just working some religious dodge or other, I guess."

"That oldest boy don't wanta be here. He feels outa place, I can see that. It ain't right to make a kid like that come out unless he wants to. He can't understand all this stuff, anyhow." This from an idler and loafer of about forty, one of those odd

hangers-on about the commercial heart of a city, addressing a pausing and seemingly amiable stranger.

"Yeh, I guess that's so," the other assented, taking in the peculiar cast of the boy's head and face. In view of the uneasy and self-conscious expression upon the face whenever it was lifted, one might have intelligently suggested that it was a little unkind as well as idle to thus publicly force upon a temperament as yet unfitted to absorb their import, religious and psychic services best suited to reflective temperaments of maturer years.

Yet so it was.

As for the remainder of the family, both the youngest girl and boy were too small to really understand much of what it was all about or to care. The eldest girl at the organ appeared not so much to mind, as to enjoy the attention and comment her presence and singing evoked, for more than once, not only strangers, but her mother and father, had assured her that she had an appealing and compelling voice, which was only partially true. It was not a good voice. They did not really understand music. Physically, she was of a pale, emasculate and unimportant structure, with no real mental force or depth, and was easily made to feel that this was an excellent field in which to distinguish herself and attract a little attention. As for the parents, they were determined upon spiritualizing the world as much as possible, and, once the hymn was concluded, the father launched into one of those hackneyed descriptions of the delights of a release, via self-realization of the mercy of God and the love of Christ and the will of God toward sinners, from the burdensome cares of an evil conscience.

"All men are sinners in the light of the Lord," he declared. "Unless they repent, unless they accept Christ, His love and forgiveness of them, they can never know the happiness of being spiritually whole and clean. Oh, my friends! If you could but know the peace and content that comes with the knowledge, the inward understanding, that Christ lived and died for you and that He walks with you every day and hour, by light and by dark, at dawn and at dusk, to keep and strengthen you for the

tasks and cares of the world that are ever before you. Oh, the snares and pitfalls that beset us all! And then the soothing realization that Christ is ever with us, to counsel, to aid, to hearten, to bind up our wounds and make us whole! Oh, the peace, the satisfaction, the comfort, the glory of that!"

"Amen!" asseverated his wife, and the daughter, Hester, or Esta, as she was called by the family, moved by the need of as much public support as possible for all of them—echoed it after her.

Clyde, the eldest boy, and the two younger children merely gazed at the ground, or occasionally at their father, with a feeling that possibly it was all true and important, yet somehow not as significant or inviting, as some of the other things which life held. They heard so much of this, and to their young and eager minds life was made for something more than street and mission hall protestations of this sort.

Finally, after a second hymn and an address by Mrs. Griffiths, during which she took occasion to refer to the mission work jointly conducted by them in a near-by street, and their services to the cause of Christ in general, a third hymn was indulged in, and then some tracts describing the mission rescue work being distributed, such voluntary gifts as were forthcoming were taken up by Asa—the father. The small organ was closed, the camp chair folded up and given to Clyde, the Bible and hymn books picked up by Mrs. Griffiths, and with the organ supported by a leather strap passed over the shoulder of Griffiths, senior, the missionward march was taken up.

During all this time Clyde was saying to himself that he did not wish to do this any more, that he and his parents looked foolish and less than normal—"cheap" was the word he would have used if he could have brought himself to express his full measure of resentment at being compelled to participate in this way—and that he would not do it any more if he could help. What good did it do them to have him along? His life should not be like this. Other boys did not have to do as he did. He meditated now more determinedly than ever a rebellion by which

he would rid himself of the need of going out in this way. Let his elder sister go if she chose; she liked it. His younger sister and brother might be too young to care. But he——

"They seemed a little more attentive than usual to-night, I thought," commented Griffiths to his wife as they walked along, the seductive quality of the summer evening air softening him into a more generous interpretation of the customary indifferent spirit of the passer-by.

"Yes; twenty-seven took tracts to-night as against eighteen on Thursday."

"The love of Christ must eventually prevail," comforted the father, as much to hearten himself as his wife. "The pleasures and cares of the world hold a very great many, but when sorrow overtakes them, then some of these seeds will take root."

"I am sure of it. That is the thought which always keeps me up. Sorrow and the weight of sin eventually bring some of them to see the error of their way."

They now entered into the narrow side street from which they had emerged, and walking as many as a dozen doors from the corner, entered the door of a yellow single-story wooden building, the large window and the two glass panes in the central door of which had been painted a gray-white. Across both windows and the smaller panels in the double door had been painted: "The Door of Hope. Bethel Independent Mission. Meetings Every Wednesday and Saturday night, 8 to 10. Sundays at 11, 3 and 8. Everybody Welcome." Under this legend on each window were printed the words: "God is Love," and below this again, in smaller type: "How Long Since You Wrote to Mother?"

The small company entered the yellow unprepossessing door and disappeared.

SINCLAIR · LEWIS

Novelist

A few years ago, after *Main Street* and *Babbitt* had been published, Stuart Sherman wrote a criticism of Sinclair Lewis, a paragraph of which follows:

"As a leader in the famous revolt of the Younger Generation, Mr. Sinclair Lewis is distinguished from many of his coevals by the velocity of his intelligence and the justice of his antipathies. Not quite incidentally, he is conspiring with the spirit of the times to become the most interesting and important novelist in America. Not, as is commonly supposed, a man of one book, he has marked his passage through the stage of brilliant promise by a succession of substantial accomplishments. Yet he is still so young and so brimming with energy, talents, and invention that he impresses one as a man from whom much is to be expected. With all his other gifts, he has that faculty for being opportune which the envious ascribe to luck but which the knowing perceive is a hard-earned acquisition and a part of the open-eyed efficiency of genius. Mr. Lewis is opportune, because he industriously studies himself and his age, like a good humanist, till he understands the needs and aspirations and powers of both."

In regard to reading as a background for adequate expression, Mr. Lewis says:

"What writers to study? Old or new? It depends so much on the person. I do not see how college students can fail to have light with such media as Conrad, Hardy, Wells' *Tono-Bungay* and *Mr. Polly*, Bennett's *Old Wives' Tale*,

Butler's *Way of All Flesh*, Wharton's *Ethan Frome*, Frank Norris's *McTeague*, Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*, and such younger contemporaries as Hergesheimer, Willa Cather, Mencken, Carl Van Doren, Francis Hackett, Stuart Sherman, Elinor Wylie, Margaret Kennedy, E. M. Forster."

—Sinclair Lewis.

MAIN STREET[1]

When Carol had walked for thirty-two minutes she had completely covered the town, east and west, north and south; and she stood at the corner of Main Street and Washington Avenue and despaired.

Main Street with its two-story brick shops, its story-and-a-half wooden residences, its muddy expanse from concrete walk to walk, its huddle of Fords and lumber-wagons, was too small to absorb her. The broad, straight, unenticing gashes of the streets let in the grasping prairie on every side. She realized the vastness and the emptiness of the land. The skeleton iron windmill on the farm a few blocks away, at the north end of Main Street, was like the ribs of a dead cow. She thought of the coming of the Northern winter, when the unprotected houses would crouch together in terror of storms galloping out of that wild waste. They were so small and weak, the little brown houses. They were shelters for sparrows, not homes for warm laughing people.

She told herself that down the street the leaves were a splendor. The maples were orange; the oaks a solid tint of raspberry. And the lawns had been nursed with love. But the thought would not hold. At best the trees resembled a thinned woodlot. There was no park to rest the eyes. And since not Gopher Prairie but Wakamin was the county-seat, there was no courthouse with its grounds.

She glanced through the fly-specked windows of the most pretentious building in sight, the one place which welcomed strangers and determined their opinion of the charm and luxury of Gopher Prairie—the Minniemashie House. It was a tall lean

[1] From *Main Street*, pp. 33–38. Reprinted by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.

shabby structure, three stories of yellow-streaked wood, the corners covered with sanded pine slabs purporting to symbolize stone. In the hotel office she could see a stretch of bare unclean floor, a line of rickety chairs with brass cuspidors between, a writing-desk with advertisements in mother-of-pearl letters upon the glass-covered back. The dining-room beyond was a jungle of stained table-cloths and catsup bottles.

She looked no more at the Minniemashie House.

A man in cuffless shirt-sleeves with pink arm-garters, wearing a linen collar but no tie, yawned his way from Dyer's Drug Store across to the hotel. He leaned against the wall, scratched a while, sighed, and in a bored way gossiped with a man tilted back in a chair. A lumber-wagon, its long green box filled with large spools of barbed-wire fencing creaked down the block. A Ford, in reverse, sounded as though it were shaking to pieces, then recovered and rattled away. In the Greek candy-store was the whine of a peanut-roaster, and the oily smell of nuts.

There was no other sound nor sign of life.

She wanted to run, fleeing from the encroaching prairie, demanding the security of a great city. Her dreams of creating a beautiful town were ludicrous. Oozing out from every drab wall, she felt a forbidding spirit which she could never conquer.

She trailed down the street on one side, back on the other, glancing into the cross streets. It was a private Seeing Main Street tour. She was within ten minutes beholding not only the heart of a place called Gopher Prairie, but ten thousand towns from Albany to San Diego:

Dyer's Drug Store, a corner building of regular and unreal blocks of artificial stone. Inside the store, a greasy marble soda-fountain with an electric lamp of red and green and curdled-yellow mosaic shade. Pawed-over heaps of tooth-brushes and combs and packages of shaving-soap. Shelves of soap-cartons, teething-rings, garden-seeds, and patent medicines in yellow packages—nostrums for consumption, for "women's diseases" —notorious mixtures of opium and alcohol, in the very shop to which her husband sent patients for the filling of prescriptions.

From a second-story window the sign "W. P. Kennicott, Phys. & Surgeon," gilt on black sand.

A small motion-picture theater called "The Rosebud Movie Palace." Lithographs announcing a film called "Fatty in Love."

Howland & Gould's Grocery. In the display window, black, over-ripe bananas and lettuce on which a cat was sleeping. Shelves lined with red crêpe paper which was now faded and torn and concentrically spotted. Flat against the wall of the second story the signs of lodges—the Knights of Pythias, the Maccabees, the Woodmen, the Masons.

Dahl & Oleson's Meat Market—a reek of blood.

A jewelry shop with tinny-looking wrist-watches for women. In front of it, at the curb, a huge wooden clock which did not go.

A fly-buzzing saloon with a brilliant gold and enamel whisky sign across the front. Other saloons down the block. From them a stink of stale beer, and thick voices bellowing pidgin German or trolling out dirty songs—vice gone feeble and unenterprising and dull—the delicacy of a mining-camp minus its vigor. In front of the saloons, farmwives sitting on the seats of wagons, waiting for their husbands to become drunk and ready to start home.

A tobacco shop called "The Smoke House," filled with young men shaking dice for cigarettes. Racks of magazines, and pictures of coy fat prostitutes in striped bathing-suits.

A clothing store with a display of "ox-blood-shade Oxfords with bull-dog toes." Suits which looked worn and glossless while they were still new, flabbily draped on dummies like corpses with painted cheeks.

The Bon Ton Store—Haydock & Simons'—the largest shop in town. The first-story front of clear glass, the plates cleverly bound at the edges with brass. The second story of pleasant tapestry brick. One window of excellent clothes for men, interspersed with collars of floral piqué which showed mauve daisies on a saffron ground. Newness and an obvious notion of neatness and service. Haydock & Simons. Haydock. She had met a

Haydock at the station; Harry Haydock; an active person of thirty-five. He seemed great to her, now, and very like a saint. His shop was clean!

Axel Egge's General Store, frequented by Scandinavian farmers. In the shallow dark window-space heaps of sleazy sateens, badly woven galateas, canvas shoes designed for women with bulging ankles, steel and red glass buttons upon cards with broken edges, a cottony blanket, a granite-ware frying-pan reposing on a sun-faded crêpe blouse.

Sam Clark's Hardware Store. An air of frankly metallic enterprise. Guns and churns and barrels of nails and beautiful shiny butcher knives.

Chester Dashaway's House Furnishing Emporium. A vista of heavy oak rockers with leather seats, asleep in a dismal row.

Billy's Lunch. Thick handleless cups on the wet oilcloth-covered counter. An odor of onions and the smoke of hot lard. In the doorway a young man audibly sucking a toothpick.

The warehouse of the buyer of cream and potatoes. The sour smell of a dairy.

The Ford Garage and the Buick Garage, competent one-story brick and cement buildings opposite each other. Old and new cars on grease-blackened concrete floors. Tire advertisements. The roaring of a tested motor; a racket which beat at the nerves. Surly young men in khaki union-overalls. The most energetic and vital places in town.

A large warehouse for agricultural implements. An impressive barricade of green and gold wheels, of shafts and sulky seats, belonging to machinery of which Carol knew nothing—potato-planters, manure-spreaders, silage-cutters, disk-harrows, breaking-plows.

A feed store, its windows opaque with the dust of bran, a patent medicine advertisement painted on its roof.

Ye Art Shoppe, Prop. Mrs. Mary Ellen Wilks, Christian Science Library open daily free. A touching fumble at beauty. A one-room shanty of boards recently covered with rough stucco. A show-window delicately rich in error: vases starting out to

imitate tree-trunks but running off into blobs of gilt—an aluminum ash-tray labeled "Greetings from Gopher Prairie"—a Christian Science magazine—a stamped sofa-cushion portraying a large ribbon tied to a small poppy, the correct skeins of embroidery-silk lying on the pillow. Inside the shop, a glimpse of bad carbon prints of bad and famous pictures, shelves of phonograph records and camera films, wooden toys, and in the midst an anxious small woman sitting in a padded rocking chair.

A barber shop and pool room. A man in shirt sleeves, presumably Del Snafflin the Proprietor, shaving a man who had a large Adam's apple.

Nat Hicks's Tailor Shop, on a side street off Main. A one-story building. A fashion-plate showing human pitchforks in garments which looked as hard as steel plate.

On another side street a raw red-brick Catholic Church with a varnished yellow door.

The post-office—merely a partition of glass and brass shutting off the rear of a mildewed room which must once have been a shop. A tilted writing-shelf against a wall rubbed black and scattered with official notices and army recruiting-posters.

The damp, yellow-brick schoolbuilding in its cindery grounds.

The State Bank, stucco masking wood.

The Farmers' National Bank. An Ionic temple of marble. Pure, exquisite, solitary. A brass plate with "Ezra Stowbody, Pres't."

A score of similar shops and establishments.

Behind them and mixed with them, the houses, meek cottages or large, comfortable, soundly uninteresting symbols of prosperity.

In all the town not one building save the Ionic bank which gave pleasure to Carol's eyes; not a dozen buildings which suggested that, in the fifty years of Gopher Prairie's existence, the citizens had realized that it was either desirable or possible to make this, their common home, amusing or attractive.

It was not only the unsparing unapologetic ugliness and the rigid straightness which overwhelmed her. It was the planless-

ness, the flimsy temporariness of the buildings, their faded unpleasant colors. The street was cluttered with electric-light poles, telephone poles, gasoline pumps for motor cars, boxes of goods. Each man had built with the most valiant disregard of all the others. Between a large new "block" of two-story brick shows on one side, and the fire-brick Overland garage on the other side, was a one-story cottage turned into a millinery shop. The white temple of the Farmers' Bank was elbowed back by a grocery of glaring yellow brick. One store-building had a patchy galvanized iron cornice; the building beside it was crowned with battlements and pyramids of brick capped with blocks of red sandstone.

She escaped from Main Street, fled home.

She wouldn't have cared, she insisted, if the people had been comely. She had noted a young man loafing before a shop, one unwashed hand holding the cord of an awning; a middle-aged man who had a way of staring at women as though he had been married too long and too prosaically; an old farmer, solid, wholesome, but not clean—his face like a potato fresh from the earth. None of them had shaved for three days.

"If they can't build shrines, out here on the prairie, surely there's nothing to prevent their buying safety-razors!" she raged.

She fought herself: "I must be wrong. People do live here. It *can't* be as ugly as—as I know it is! I must be wrong. But I can't do it. I can't go through with it."

She came home too seriously worried for hysteria; and when she found Kennicott waiting for her, and exulting, "Have a walk? Well, like the town? Great lawns and trees, eh?" she was able to say, with a self-protective maturity new to her, "It's very interesting."

ZONA GALE

Dramatist, novelist, short-story writer

"Technique means the power to interpret things as one sees them." Miss Gale, the artist, knows whereof she speaks. She interprets the people of the village as she sees them—simply—and there is nothing more to say about them. There is no unnecessary or lengthy explanation or analysis. What her characters are doing now is an explanation of what they have done and of what they will do. To appreciate the simplicity and beauty of her art, one need only read her group of short-stories called *Yellow Gentians and Blue*. Sometimes they are only one thousand words in length, yet after reading them one wonders what more could have been said. And realizes that nothing more ought to be said, for she has told all that is necessary, and yet told it so completely and artistically that one reads these stories again and again out of sheer amazement and admiration.

Interesting comparisons and contrasts can be made in the study of the treatment of village and small-town life by Miss Gale, Mr. Lewis, and Mr. Sherwood Anderson.

"I am interested in your letter and your effort to emphasize a most important matter. It happens to be one of which I have recently thought a good deal because I talked with a young woman in Minnesota who, at the University of Wisconsin, had made a brilliant record in English. Later she had done some creditable work in journalism and had had a year abroad. Then she married and found herself with much leisure and a husband who

was eager that she should go on with the work in fiction which she had wanted to do. He said to me, 'She could write, but she is waiting for her inspiration.' I recall that I said to him, 'It will not come. Inspiration does not have to be waited for. It is there. If it is not there and if she really can write, it means that she has not yet made a channel. It is as if by patient practice one had to create the *organ* which later seems to write for one. Call it the habit, if that is clearer and more scientific, but in either case it is definitely a channel through which this power which she had can express itself.'

"I think that this sums up the case as well as I can put it. It seems to me that it takes at least as much patient work to learn to write as it does to play a musical instrument. No one waits for spirit to move him to play unless he is a prodigy, and the prodigies probably work harder than anyone else to supplement their gift by technique. In a phrase which does not represent our precious heritage of the English language, technique means that power to *put over* idea, characterization, or atmosphere or emotion or beauty. The power, in short, to interpret things as one sees them. And this can not be done in words any more than in notes or in paint or in marble without long and intimate practice. The beautiful part is that after one has worked at it for a little time as drudgery, it opens like a flower and becomes a delight. Everybody who plays knows that such a moment arrives in studying the piano. To a linguist such a moment arrives in studying a language. It arrives in the acquiring of any technique from ice skating up. No one skates from inspiration alone."

—Zona Gale.

BIRTH [1]

The village day went on. Everywhere the invisible ruled. The sign for the Angelus was given from the steeple, and the memorial to a moment—mystic and imperishable—beat in many hearts. The little shops were opened, and out came the humble symbols—cakes, fruit, fabrics. Awnings were lowered, watering-cans made cool the old boards, anæmic little boys drew large mops across the windows. A faint odor of browned crust began to steal from the bakery. The photographer set out on the little "cobbled" shelf before an upper window, his negatives —a bride and groom, an old man who "sat" for the last time and to please the children; a naked baby. The doors of the Burage *Weekly* were open, and the smell of wet ink and paper hung in the air. In the cramped Post Office the contents of a lean bag were distributed by the old post-master, as slowly as if the mail were the mills of God; dusty, fly-specked little hole, where the state functioned as precisely as under hard wood and marble; and, in their tiny glass coffins, marked with worn red letters, were popped missives of death, of life, of love, of unspeakable commonplace.

Epps, the undertaker, ran round the corner. He was going to make ready for burial the body of Lee Ashe. His body lay at the house of a friend across the alley, and there his funeral would be held, because his own parlor had never been furnished. A freckled, hairy man, this Ashe, who had had a way of button-holing folk and talking close to their faces. When one saw him coming, one crossed the street. He had liked others and no one had liked him. Now there went the undertaker. Men saw the crape and thought: "Well, it would have been easy to talk to

[1] From *Birth*, pp. 70–73. Reprinted by permission of The Macmillan Company.

him sometimes, after all," and they wondered why Epps didn't get his wife to press out that old crape.

A farm wagon was hitched at the bank-corner, and three angular women crossed to the lawyer's office. "Batten, Attorney-at-Law," the sign said, and their hearts beat as they went up the sunken stair. A square man of their family, a man with lips and eye-balls like puffy plums, sat waiting for them. They all talked at once to Batten, who listened with his eyes shut and had occasional twinges of rheumatism and twisted in his chair, held his breath, and emitted it in a whisper. All this was about a line fence which had been discovered to be two feet farther east on the surface of the world than was thought to be true righteousness. The man of puffy plums smashed down his fist. One of the angular women sat tense, with thin lips and tossing head. Outside the earth stretched twelve thousand miles each way from Batten's office, and no one was thinking about it.

All down the little Main Street men came to their work. They thought about the orders they must fill that day, the amounts due them; a train whistled, and they knew that it was ten minutes late; so-and-so's grass needed cutting, they noted; and there was his brother visiting him from Seattle, why didn't he do it? Fat geese waddled about a back yard. Somebody had a little tree of crab apples, and the family was gathering them for a jar of marmalade. Locusts sang. It was going to be a hot day. Cans of cream were driven to the creamery. A bill poster put up a terrible warning, calculated to lure: "The Candy Ladies. Come and See." Old Mrs. Jellsie fed the white rooster which her son had sent her a week ago. Little Curt Whitman went by with his red cart. The Messers' baby cried.

Once an excitement was caused by Aden Older, whose mind was queer, appearing on his front veranda and screaming about the protective tariff. His daughter, with her embroidery in one hand, came and led him away, successfully diverting his attention from national politics by telling him that his custard was ready. Once Aden Older had been the boss of the County. Now he almost ran to his custard.

This was the day on which Jenny Berry let her mother go to the poor house. By scrubbing and cleaning, Jenny had been able to support both, but she had no one with whom to leave her mother. Alone, the old woman cut off her hair, burned the bed-"clothes," chased chickens, emptied a pot of pickles on the front steps. And no one would care for her. So Jenny stayed at home, and they both came near to starvation. "Take her, then," said Jenny at last. "One hell more won't burn nobody. Me? No, I don't care. And ma don't know enough to care. But if anybody invites me to the missionary circle again, I'll knock the top of their head off."

At the Carters', Josephine Carter had just brought home her young husband to the shabby yellow frame house and to the sloping-roofed room where she had slept since she was a little girl. A great occasion. And yet the low windows of the sloping-roofed home looked no different. Next door the Bennets' new house was going up. Only the two of them, and all that room! They say there'll be windows in the closets. What do they want of a fire-place—can't they afford a furnace? *Both!* Say, where did Sim Bennet get his ideas?

About noon a loose horse appears. She gallops on the brick walks and on the side-walk boards. Everybody who has oats comes running with a hatful of oats. She dodges down an alley. Everybody remembers the Johnsons' baby in that block. Whose horse is it? Barnay's again. Funny he can't keep his barn-yard shut up. There she goes! Her master comes running, the horse takes the bridle, and everybody turns indoors, secretly disappointed.

The Summer afternoon slips through the little village, and is gone. It seems to have touched nothing. A few women water the plants. Ministers go patiently about making expected calls and entering them in their little books. A load of hay comes creaking under the elms. Tillie Paul strolls by with a cake which her mother has baked for somebody. The Youngers are carrying their father's supper down to the shop. Poor Jeff Cribb is out walking up and down the bricks—waiting. Everybody knows

for what he waits, walking there every day, coughing. A group of girls in pink and blue and yellow as yielding as thistledown, go footing home from some errand, manufactured for its own delight. Children pass, singing or quarreling. Garments are gathered in from lines and from grass, and sprinkled. Bennie Jedd drives home his mother's cow.

Six o'clock. Over the golden aisles of the streets, mysterious with maple boughs, once more the Angelus, the bass of the roundhouse whistle, the treble of the brick-yard whistle. Burage breathes deep, all the tension of the day dissolves. A new air permeates the village. It relaxes, expects. It is as if some great brooding, wistful face, so close to all, changes expression; and every one replies. A creative moment, spiritual, tender, human. All Burage either goes home or welcomes home. Meetings, supper, complaints, tenderness, irritations, control. An impressive and spectacular and glorious moment, and a terrible moment. The expansion of human beings in centers carefully contrived. Or the crushing of human beings into centers benumbing, crippling. Beings seldom thrilling from creative work, but leaden from toil of rote. The cry of all the world in the throat of the people of Burage at six o'clock.

WILLA CATHER

Novelist, short-story writer

Miss Cather has been concerned chiefly with the presentation of American pioneer life. Miss Cather presents those early people with truth, because she is a thorough student and knows her subject; and with beauty, because she has mastered the art of writing. She presents other themes like *The Professor's House*, though here, too, appears the touch of those early days in the discovery of an ancient city of the Southwest.

Miss Cather does not "overfurnish" her novels. She has never fallen in line with that coterie of realists who emphasize the trivial. She is always aware of the grandeur of life, even in the struggle for existence. Moreover, she has known, as every true artist does, that truth and beauty can be expressed only with simplicity of language. American literature like hers is never cheap nor gaudy.

The novel, for a long while, has been over-furnished. The property-man has been so busy on its pages, the importance of material objects and their vivid presentation have been so stressed, that we take it for granted whoever can observe, and can write the English language, can write a novel. Often the latter qualification is considered unnecessary.

In any discussion of the novel, one must make it clear whether one is talking about the novel as a form of amusement, or as a form of art; since they serve very different purposes and in very different ways. One does not wish

the egg one eats for breakfast, or the morning paper, to be made of the stuff of immortality. The novel manufactured to entertain great multitudes of people must be considered exactly like a cheap soap or a cheap perfume, or cheap furniture. Fine quality is a distinct disadvantage in articles made for great numbers of people who do not want quality but quantity, who do not want a thing that "wears," but who want change—a succession of new things that are quickly threadbare and can be lightly thrown away. Does any one pretend that if the Woolworth-store windows were piled high with Tanagra figurines at ten cents, they could for a moment compete with Kewpie brides in the popular esteem? Amusement is one thing; enjoyment of art is another.

Every writer who is an artist knows that his "power of observation," and his "power of description" form but a low part of his equipment. He must have both, to be sure; but he knows that the most trivial of writers often have a very good observation. Mérimée said in his remarkable essay on Gogol: "L'art de choisir parmi les innombrable traits que nous offre la nature est, après tout, bien plus difficile que celui de les observer avec attention et de les rendre avec exactitude."

There is a popular superstition that "realism" asserts itself in the cataloguing of a great number of material objects, in explaining mechanical processes, the methods of operating manufacturies and trades, and in minutely and unsparingly describing physical sensation. But is not realism, more than it is anything else, an attitude of mind on the part of the writer toward his material, a vague definition of the sympathy and candor with which he accepts, rather than chooses his theme? Is the story of a banker who is unfaithful to his wife and who ruins himself in

speculation in trying to gratify the caprices of his mistresses, at all reinforced by a masterly exposition of the banking system, our whole system of credits, the methods of the Stock Exchange? Of course, if the story is thin, these things do reinforce it in a sense,—any amount of red meat thrown into the scale to make the beam dip. But are the banking system and the Stock Exchange worth being written about at all? Have such things any place in imaginative art?

The automatic reply to this question is the name of Balzac. Yes, certainly, Balzac tried out the value of literalness in the novel, tried it out to the uttermost, as Wagner did the value of the scenic literalness in the music drama. He tried it, too, with the passion of discovery, with the inflamed zest of an unexampled curiosity. If the heat of that furnace could not give hardness and sharpness to material accessories, no other brain will ever do it. To reproduce on paper the actual city of Paris; the houses, the upholstery, the food, the wines, the game of pleasure, the game of finance; a stupendous ambition—but, after all, unworthy of an artist. In exactly so far as he succeeded in pouring out on his pages that mass of brick and mortar and furniture and proceedings in bankruptcy, in exactly so far he defeated his end. The things by which he still lives, the types of greed and avarice and ambition and vanity and lost innocence of heart which he created—are as vital to-day as they were then. But their material surroundings, upon which he expended such labor and pains . . . the eye glides over them. We have had too much of the interior decorator and the "romance of business" since his day. The city he built on paper is already crumbling. Stevenson said he wanted to blue-pencil a great deal of Balzac's "presentation"—and he loved him beyond all modern novelists. But where is the man who

could cut one sentence from the stories of Mérimée? And who wants any more detail as to how Carmencita and her fellow factory girls made cigars? Another sort of novel? Truly. Isn't it a better sort?

In this discussion another great name automatically occurs. Tolstoi was almost as great a lover of material things as Balzac, almost as much interested in the way dishes were cooked, and people were dressed, and houses were furnished. But there is this determining difference; the clothes, the dishes, the moving, haunting interiors of those old Moscow houses, are always so much a part of the emotions of the people that they are perfectly synthesized; they seem to exist, not so much in the author's mind, as in the emotional penumbra of the characters themselves. When it is fused like this, literalness ceases to be literalness—it is merely part of the experience.

If the novel is a form of imaginative art, it cannot be at the same time a vivid and brilliant form of journalism. Out of the teeming, gleaming stream of the present it must select the eternal material of art. There are hopeful signs that some of the younger writers are trying to break away from mere verisimilitude, and, following the development of modern painting, to interpret imaginatively the material and social investiture of their characters; to present their scene by suggestion rather than by enumeration. The higher processes of art are all processes of simplification. The novelist must learn to write, and then he must unlearn it; just as the modern painter learns to draw, and then learns when utterly to disregard his accomplishment, when to subordinate it to a higher and truer effect. In this direction only, it seems to me, can the novel develop into anything more varied and perfect than all of the many novels that have gone before.

One of the very earliest American novels might well serve as a suggestion to later writers. In *The Scarlet Letter* how truly in the spirit of art is the *mise en scène* presented. The drudge, the theme-writing high school student, could scarcely be sent there for information regarding the manners and dress and interiors of the Puritans. The material investiture of the story is presented as if unconsciously; by the reserved, fastidious hand of an artist, not by the gaudy fingers of a showman or the mechanical industry of a department store window-dresser. As I remember it, in the twilight melancholy of that book, in its consistent mood, one can scarcely ever see the actual surroundings of the people; one feels them, rather, in the dusk.

Whatever is felt upon the page without being specifically named there—that, it seems to me, is created. It is the inexplicable presence of the thing not named, of the overtone divined by the ear but not heard by it, the verbal mood, the emotional aura of the fact or the thing or the deed, that gives high quality to the novel or the drama, as well as to poetry itself.

Literalness, when applied to the presenting of mental reactions and of physical sensations seems to be no more effective than when it is applied to material things. A novel crowded with physical sensations is no less a catalogue than one crowded with furniture. A book like *The Rainbow* by Mr. Lawrence sharply reminds one how vast a distance lies between emotion and mere sensory reactions. Characters can be almost de-humanized by a laboratory study of the behavior of their bodily organs under sensory stimuli—can be reduced, indeed, to mere animal pulp. Can one imagine anything more terrible than the story of Romeo and Juliet, rewritten in prose by Mr. Lawrence?

How wonderful it would be if we could throw all the furniture out of the window; and along with it, all the meaningless reiterations concerning physical sensations, all the tiresome old patterns, and leave the room as bare as the stage of a Greek theater, or as that house into which the glory of Pentecost descended; leave the scene bare for the play of emotions, great and little—for the nursery tale, no less than the tragedy, is killed by tasteless amplitude. The elder Dumas enunciated a great principle when he said that to make a drama, a man needed one passion, and four walls.

—Willa Cather, in "The Novel Démeublé." [1]

[1] Reprinted from *The New Republic* by permission of the author and publishers.

THE DISCOVERING OF AN ANCIENT CITY [1]

The canyon was wide at the water's edge, and though it corkscrewed back into the mesa by abrupt turns, it preserved this open, roomy character. It was, indeed, a very deep valley with gently sloping sides, rugged and rocky, but well grassed. There was a clear trail. Horses have no sense about making a trail, but you can trust cattle to find the easiest possible path and to take the lowest grades. The bluish rock and the sun-tanned grass, under the unusual purple-grey of the sky, gave the whole valley a very soft colour, lavender and pale gold, so that the occasional cedars growing beside the boulders looked black that morning. It may have been the hint of snow in the air, but it seemed to me that I had never breathed anything that tasted so pure as the air in that valley. It made my mouth and nostrils smart like charged water, seemed to go to my head a little and produce a kind of exaltation. I kept telling myself that it was very different from the air on the other side of the river, though that was pure and uncontaminated enough.

When I had gone up this canyon for a mile or so, I came upon another, opening out to the north—a box canyon, very different in character. No gentle slope there. The walls were perpendicular, where they weren't actually overhanging, and they were anywhere from eight hundred to a thousand feet high, as we afterward found by measurement. The floor of it was a mass of huge boulders, great pieces of rock that had fallen from above ages back, and had been worn round and smooth as pebbles by the long action of water. Many of them were as big as haystacks, yet they lay piled on one another like a load of gravel. There was

[1] Reprinted from *The Professor's House* by Willa Cather, by and with permission of and special arrangement with Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., authorized publishers.

no footing for my horse among those smooth stones, so I hobbled him and went on alone a little way, just to see what it was like. My eyes were steadily on the ground—a slip of the foot there might cripple one.

It was such rough scrambling that I was soon in a warm sweat under my damp clothes. In stopping to take breath, I happened to glance up at the canyon wall. I wish I could tell you what I saw there, just as I saw it, on that first morning, through a veil of lightly falling snow. Far up above me, a thousand feet or so, set in a great cavern in the face of the cliff, I saw a little city of stone, asleep. It was as still as sculpture—and something like that. It all hung together, seemed to have a kind of composition: pale little houses of stone nestling close to one another, perched on top of each other, with flat roofs, narrow windows, straight walls, and in the middle of the group, a round tower.

It was beautifully proportioned, that tower, swelling out to a larger girth a little above the base, then growing slender again. There was something symmetrical and powerful about the swell of the masonry. The tower was the fine thing that held all the jumble of houses together and made them mean something. It was red in colour, even on that grey day. In sunlight it was the colour of winter oak-leaves. A fringe of cedars grew along the edge of the cavern, like a garden. They were the only living things. Such silence and stillness and repose—immortal repose. That village sat looking down into the canyon with the calmness of eternity. The falling snow-flakes, sprinkling the piñons, gave it a special kind of solemnity. I can't describe it. It was more like sculpture than anything else. I knew at once that I had come upon the city of some extinct civilization, hidden away in this inaccessible mesa for centuries, preserved in the dry air and almost perpetual sunlight like a fly in amber, guarded by the cliffs and the river and the desert.

One thing we knew about these people; they hadn't built their town in a hurry. Everything proved their patience and

deliberation. The cedar joists had been felled with stone axes and rubbed smooth with sand. The little poles that lay across them and held up the clay floor of the chamber above, were smoothly polished. The door lintels were carefully fitted (the doors were stone slabs held in place by wooden bars fitted into hasps). The clay dressing that covered the stone walls was tinted, and some of the chambers were frescoed in geometrical patterns, one colour laid on another. In one room was a painted border, little tents, like Indian tepees, in brilliant red.

But the really splendid thing about our city, the thing that made it delightful to work there, and must have made it delightful to live there was the setting. The town hung like a bird's nest in the cliff, looking off into the box canyon below, and beyond into the wide valley we called Cow Canyon, facing an ocean of clear air. A people who had the hardihood to build there, and who lived day after day looking down upon such grandeur, who came and went by those hazardous trails, must have been, as we often told each other, a fine people. But what had become of them? What catastrophe had overwhelmed them?

They hadn't moved away, for they had taken none of their belongings, not even their clothes. Oh, yes, we found clothes; yucca moccasins, and what seemed like cotton cloth, woven in black and white. Never any wool, but sheepskins tanned with the fleece on them. They may have been mountain sheep; the mesa was full of them. We talked of shooting one for meat, but we never did. When a mountain sheep comes out on a ledge hundreds of feet above you, with his trumpet horns, there's something noble about him—he looks like a priest. We didn't want to shoot at them and make them shy. We liked to see them. We shot a wild cow when we wanted fresh meat.

At last we came upon one of the original inhabitants—not a skeleton, but a dried human body, a woman. She was not in the Cliff City; we found her in a little group of houses stuck up in a high arch we called the Eagle's Nest. She was lying on a yucca mat, partly covered with rags, and she had dried into a

mummy in that water-drinking air. We thought she had been murdered; there was a great wound in her side, the ribs stuck out through the dried flesh. Her mouth was open as if she were screaming, and her face, through all those years, had kept a look of terrible agony. Part of the nose was gone, but she had plenty of teeth, not one missing, and a great deal of coarse black hair. Her teeth were even and white, and so little worn that we thought she must have been a young woman. Henry named her Mother Eve, and we called her that. We put her in a blanket and let her down with great care, and kept her in a chamber in the Cliff City.

Yes, we found three other bodies, but afterward. One day, working in the Cliff City, we came upon a stone slab, at one end of the cavern, that seemed to lead straight into the rock. It was set in cement, and when we loosened it we found it opened into a small, dark chamber. In this there had been a platform, of fine cedar poles laid side by side, but it had crumbled. In the wreckage were three bodies, one man and two women, wrapped in yucca-fibre, all in the same posture and apparently prepared for burial. They were the bodies of old people. We believed they were among the aged who were left behind when the tribe went down to live on their farms in the summer season; that they had died in the absence of the villagers, and were put into this mortuary chamber to await the return of the tribe, when they would have their funeral rites. Probably these people burned their dead. Of course an archæologist could have told a great deal about that civilization from those bodies. But they never got to an archæologist—at least, not on this side of the world.

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